

The State of Cold Calling in 2024

Welcome to Cognism's State of Cold Calling Report 🙌

We've worked with We Have A Meeting (WHAM) to collect data from 10,000 cold calls.

Our goal?

To gather intel on the state of cold calling for 2024.

In this report, you'll find out a wide range of information, such as the most common objection, the best time and day to call, and more.

And the icing on the cake? We've featured contributions from some amazing sales gurus such as Sara Plowman, Morgan Ingram, and Charlotte Johnson.

They've offered their thoughts on the results, so you can do something actionable with the data we've provided.

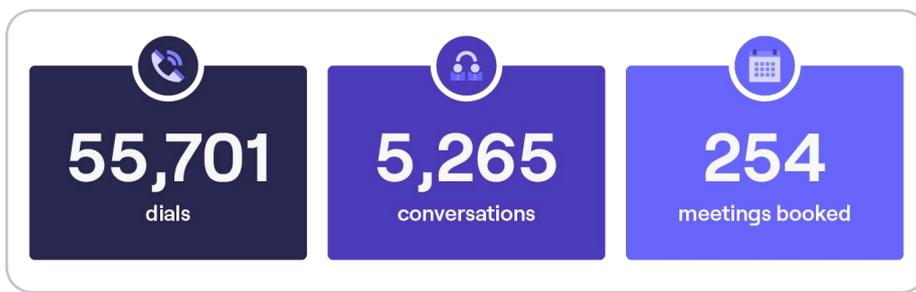


The State of Cold Calling in 2024: Setting The Scene

Before we dive into the specific data points, we thought we'd set the scene regarding the state of cold calling for 2024.

🌟 NEWSFLASH 🌟 It works!

We've put our detective hats on and done some digging into our cold calls.



According to this data set, we found out the following 📌

The Success Rate of Cold Calls (meetings booked from conversations)

Firstly, the average cold call success rate in 2024 is 4.82%.



This means that out of 5265 conversations, 254 meetings were booked successfully.

Now, you might be thinking: Is this good? Why do these cold calling statistics matter?

The rate has doubled, from 2% in 2023 - based on research we conducted from our calls last year.

This tells us something very simple:

Our sales team's result proves that the state of cold calling isn't dead in 2024.

And [Emerald Maravilla](#), the Director of Sales Development at Snowflake, certainly agreed:

“Here at Snowflake, cold calling is a real emphasis for us. We’re making coaching of phone sales activity, phone presence, and messaging a core focus for our team. Here in North America, people love picking up the phones.”



Key takeaway?

With the right practice and reinforcement, there is still huge scope and opportunity for sales reps to see repeatable success on the phones.

And when we spoke with [Chris Ritson](#), Co-Founder of The SDR Leader he agreed:

“I do believe that cold calling is going to be really important for SDR teams, AE teams, even full cycle teams.”



“From the communication perspective, with calling you have the ability to leverage your tone of voice – **it is 4.5x more powerful** than the words that you use. With emails, LinkedIn DMs, etc, you can’t leverage your tone of voice in the same way.”

[Zac Thompson](#), one of the Founding Directors at We Have A Meeting, shared Chris’ view:

Zac Thompson, one of the Founding Directors at We Have A Meeting, shared Chris' view:

“There’s a belief in the silver bullet way of prospecting, and that means some channels remain to have untapped potential.”



He shared more in the clip below:

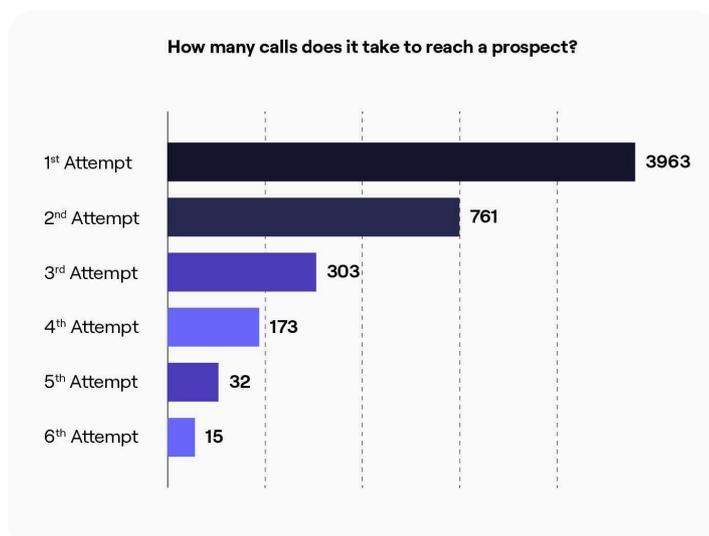
This insight tells us that it’s possible for sales representatives to get through to potential customers. Just look at...



The Number of Calls It Takes to Reach a Prospect

3 is the optimal number of cold call attempts in order to have the best chance of connecting with a lead.

Based on our data, you have around a 75% chance of the prospect picking up on the first attempt.



The fact that you get through a prospect quickly is also supported by our findings on the...

Cold Call Connection Rate

From 55,701 dials, 9247 were connected.

This high connection rate reveals a couple of important takeaways, both for sales agents and sales leaders:



1. Mobile number quality matters a huge deal

If your team doesn't have good contact data, connection rates are going to be poor. In 2024, one of the core trends or priorities for many sellers is going to be investing in an effective data provider.

And yes - we said mobile numbers. David Bentham, Cognism's VP of Global Sales Development is a huge believer in this, and here's why...

“With mobile numbers, you're going to get the highest response rate. In terms of cold calling in the US, calling cell phone numbers is the norm, and while in Europe it's less common, mobiles still do work.”



“Remember, the mobile number doesn’t just have to be used for cold calling purposes in isolation. My team has seen great value in using this contact information for texting or voicemails.”

“In fact, WhatsApp is a fantastic tool to supplement your sales efforts right now, especially as they’re defining themselves more as a business tool.”

2. Don’t assume that prospects find calls annoying and they won’t pick up the phone

The phone continues to be one of the most underutilised outbound channels out there.

In the clip below, [Charlotte Johnson](#), Senior AE at Salesloft explained why:

When it comes to the cold calling success rate, looking at connects in isolation doesn’t give the full picture. Therefore, we also looked at...



The Conversion Rate Of Dials → Conversations → Meetings Booked Rate

Our data uncovered the number of conversations vs dials, as well as the number of conversations vs meetings booked.

Here's the state of play (according to our findings):



Kicking off with the dial-to-conversation rate:

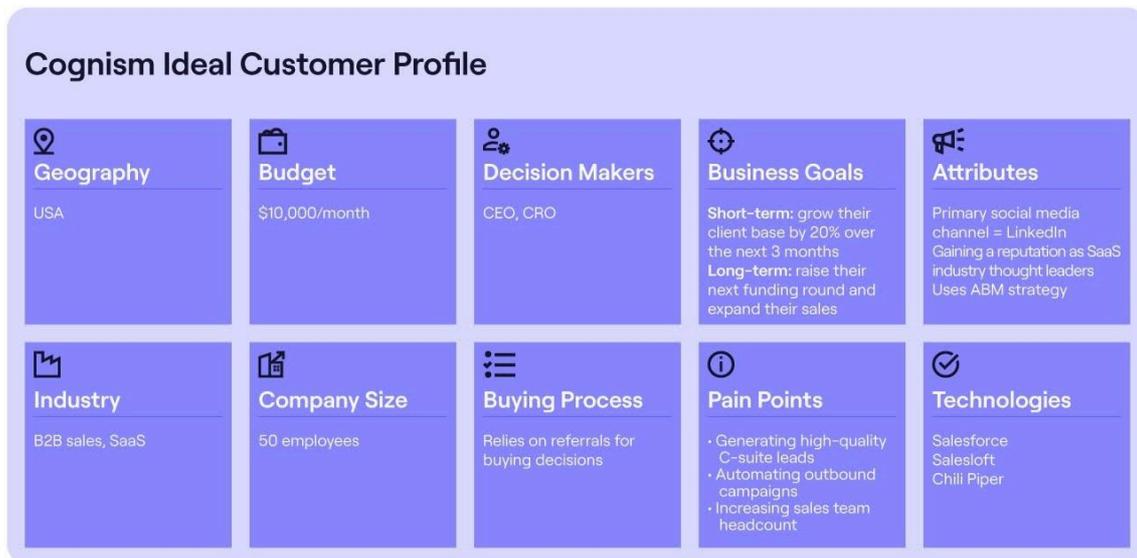
Out of the 9247 outbound calls that were connected, meaning that a seller got through to a prospect, 5265 conversations took place.

This figure is a testament to good targeting, and ensuring that your ICP is established.

For example, our sales reps are having successful conversations, because we've got a clear account-based outbound model in place.

The sellers have a strong awareness and visibility of what the best-fit account looks like.

For instance, there's a crystal-clear understanding of who the decision-makers are, and what their goals are, through access to data like the average contract value:



Ultimately, without this understanding, you're not going to be talking to the correct person. And you may even find that you're reaching accounts that aren't a good fit to start with.

And that only scratches the surface.

Once you've got the foundations, it comes down to thinking about the cold calling techniques that ensure conversations turn into booked meetings.

As mentioned at the start of this article, we saw a 4.82% success rate - meaning that out of the 5,265 conversations, 254 meetings were booked.

So, in 2024, what does it take to get B2B customers to say yes to a meeting?

Ask yourself:

Are you communicating with your desired ICP, persona or prospect in the right way?

For instance, our data uncovered that CEOs are the most likely business professionals to pick up the phone. And to ensure our reps can convey the strongest message possible, they speak with individuals that are further down the organisation to build a strong business case - otherwise known as groundswell.

This bottom-up approach means that problems can be brought to a CEO's attention - some of which they may have not even been aware of in the first place.

Morgan Ingram, 4x LinkedIn Top Sales Voice and Founder of AMP agreed, saying that with the right approach, sellers have the power to have a memorable conversation:

“Reps are speaking to B2B buyers on a consistent basis. Because they're speaking to more of their market than anyone else.”



“Have the confidence that the insights you've gathered are ones that prospects - especially executives - are going to be interested in. Breaking through that threshold of understanding can be the difference between a conversation and a booked meeting.”

Now that we've set the scene, let's dive into the specific data points that we collected, around the state of cold calling in 2024.

Starting with...

How Long Does the Average Cold Call Last?

Our data, based on 55,000 direct dials and 10,000 cold calls, demonstrated that the average cold call length is 83 seconds.

That's not a long time AT ALL!

So, we wanted to hunt down the best way to make an impact in this limited time frame. We spoke to some sales gurus who gave some great cold calling tips.

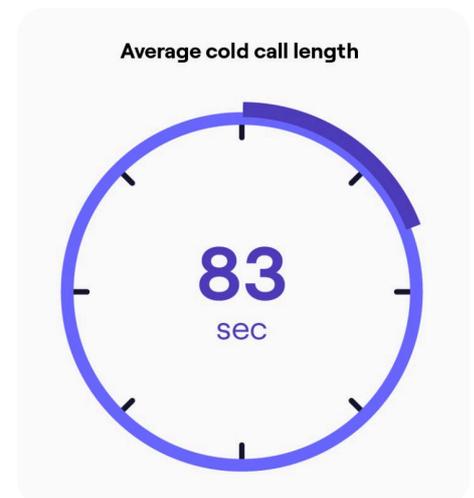
Results at a Glance

Here's what we learnt:

It's fair to say that the time of an interaction between one of our sellers and a prospect is small. And we're pretty sure this is typical for a lot of other sellers too

What's even more interesting is that only 31% of calls get past the pitch! So, we wanted to understand how sellers can...

- Optimise the first half of their cold call.
- Make every second of the conversation count.
- Communicate the value prompt and deliver an effective sales pitch.



There's lots of information in store, so keep on scrolling 📌

Open With a Bang (and Context)!

Cold calls can reveal a lot about a seller's personality.

Are they calm?

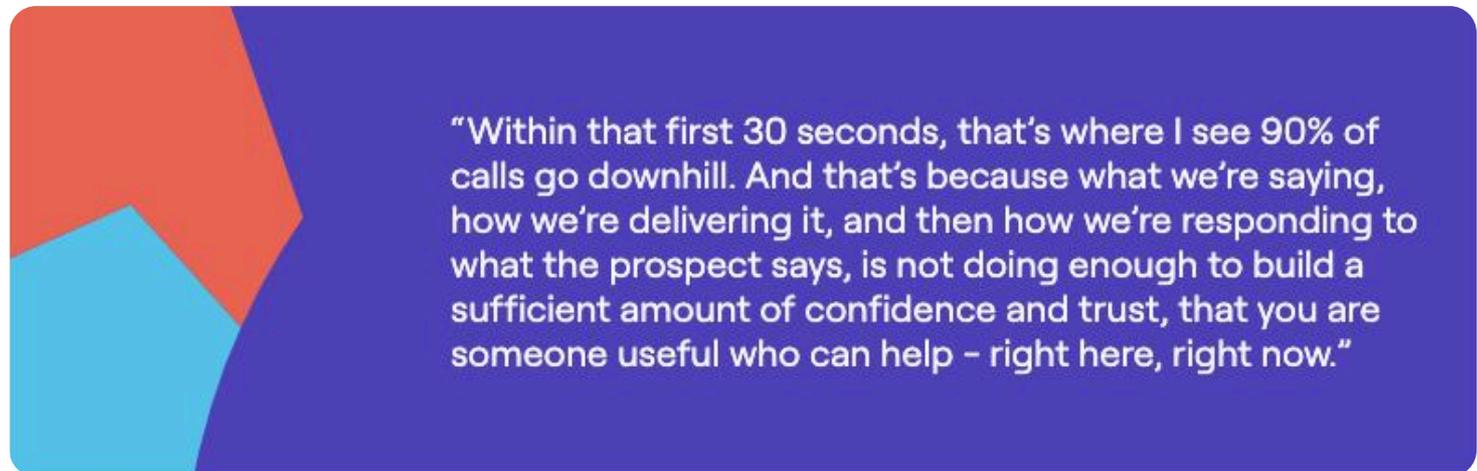
Are they confident?

Are they emotionally intelligent?

Potential buyers can suss out these traits, even from the moment the call begins.

First impressions matter – so when you open the call, think of it like a job interview. Chris said:

“The fact that only 31% of calls get past the sales pitch means that the bar is pretty low. And that leaves the opportunity for others to do something better.”



“Within that first 30 seconds, that’s where I see 90% of calls go downhill. And that’s because what we’re saying, how we’re delivering it, and then how we’re responding to what the prospect says, is not doing enough to build a sufficient amount of confidence and trust, that you are someone useful who can help – right here, right now.”

Morgan agreed:

“It’s all about the intro. How exactly are you coming in the first 3 to 8 seconds? People can be confused if they don’t know who they are.”

“Bear in mind that if this basic information is not covered, a lot of time can be spent in the call, going back and forth, to finally get to the value prompt.”

“You risk setting yourself up for a brain freeze, especially if you’re faced with an objection, and then the conversation ends.”

The bottom line here is context.

Chris shared more in the snippet below:

The idea of nailing the first few seconds of a call can be a daunting one. But remember that your sales process doesn’t have to be static.

Morgan reminded us that sellers have room and time to experiment, and find out what works:

“Here’s a tactic: on every other call, or every 10 to 20 connects, switch up the intro. See what feels best for you. I could give you 10 different intros, but ultimately it’s up to you to find the one that works best for you.”

Once you’re comfortable with one, your confidence will grow.

Speaking of which, let’s talk about this next, because it can determine how you’re utilising the limited time you have to speak with a prospect.

The Confidence Factor

Now we get it. Speaking with someone you’ve never had a conversation with before can be scary.

It takes confidence, and it’s built over time. Getting this down means you’re empowered to have high-quality outbound calls with prospects.

It takes patience. Take it from Sara Plowman, a cold calling expert and Senior Business Development Manager at Pareto USA:



She added:

“I truly think we need to get more people on cold calling, the trend of old school is still in. And yes – it’s hard work and takes great motivation. But a lot of people respect it – they tell me when I make calls.”



It also comes down to the belief that you do belong here.

Once that mindset shift takes place, you’re in a confident position where you want to and can help a prospect – that’ll help you get past the sales pitch and really make a difference.

Morgan explained more:

“When you enter into the call, it’s the idea that you’re supposed to be here. You’ll hang onto the call longer, have a steady pace, and not get rattled. Prospects – especially sales leaders – will notice and respect the calm confidence that you have on the phone.”

Have A Framework

Having a plan of attack before you pick up the phone can help ensure that the cold call has a direction or structure to it.

This means that you can ensure that you get as much information as possible, and make the short period of time valuable, informative, and helpful – both for you and the prospect!

Morgan provided his structure:

“Whenever I train sales teams, there are 3 components that I tell them to focus on, when making a call: **persona, personal, and what’s happening at the company.**”

PERSONA → Understand their goals, challenges, objectives. If you don't have this information, speak to your internal executives to get an idea.

PERSONAL → Did they post something relevant on LinkedIn? What sort of content are they engaging in that would be relevant for your call with them?

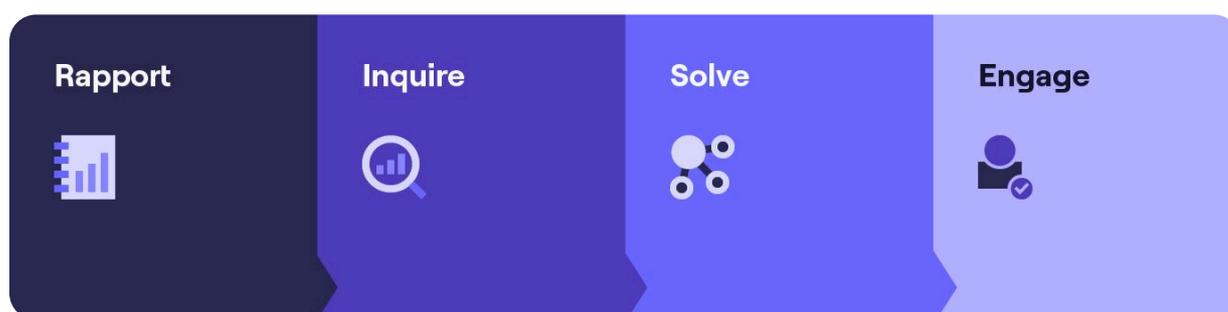
WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE COMPANY → Find this out through interviews. Type in the prospect's name into Google, go on YouTube, and open up the description. Show the full transcript, and you can get the highlights. Has there been a product update? How about a change in leadership that you can call out?

Having a framework in place also means that your sales efforts don't go off track. And you can gain the relevant information that you need in the limited time frame.

In a recent live training, Tom Slocum, Founder and CEO of The SD Lab, shared a new framework that he's been getting his team to use on phone calls. It's called the R.I.S.E. framework.



Here is an overview 📌



Kicking off with rapport, Tom said:

“You open the call with something personal. For instance – you could mention something that the prospect has done recently, that's been interesting. You're showing them that you know their world a little bit.”

Once you've built trust, you then move into inquire. This is about demonstrating a natural curiosity, and asking open-ended questions:

“You’ll be asking them questions that’ll open up the dialogue, as the prospect provides intel into what they’re doing right now.”

Then, you move into the solve part of the framework:

“Once you’ve asked the open-ended questions and great follow-up questions, it’s time to show them a quick win. It’s like a neat little trick up your sleeve – show the prospect you can help them.”

And finally, you enter into the engage section – which is all about taking action:

“You propose a next step that feels collaborative. And remember, it’s not a matter of ‘hey let’s get on a call and schedule a demo or meeting.’”

You can tune into the full episode of Tom’s session below:

Frameworks like this will ensure you go the extra mile. It’ll set you apart from the other spray-and-prayers out there. You have the power to provide a lot of great insights, in just 80 seconds – or even less!



Which Persona is Most Likely to Answer a Cold Call in 2024?

Who in B2B has the best answer rates?

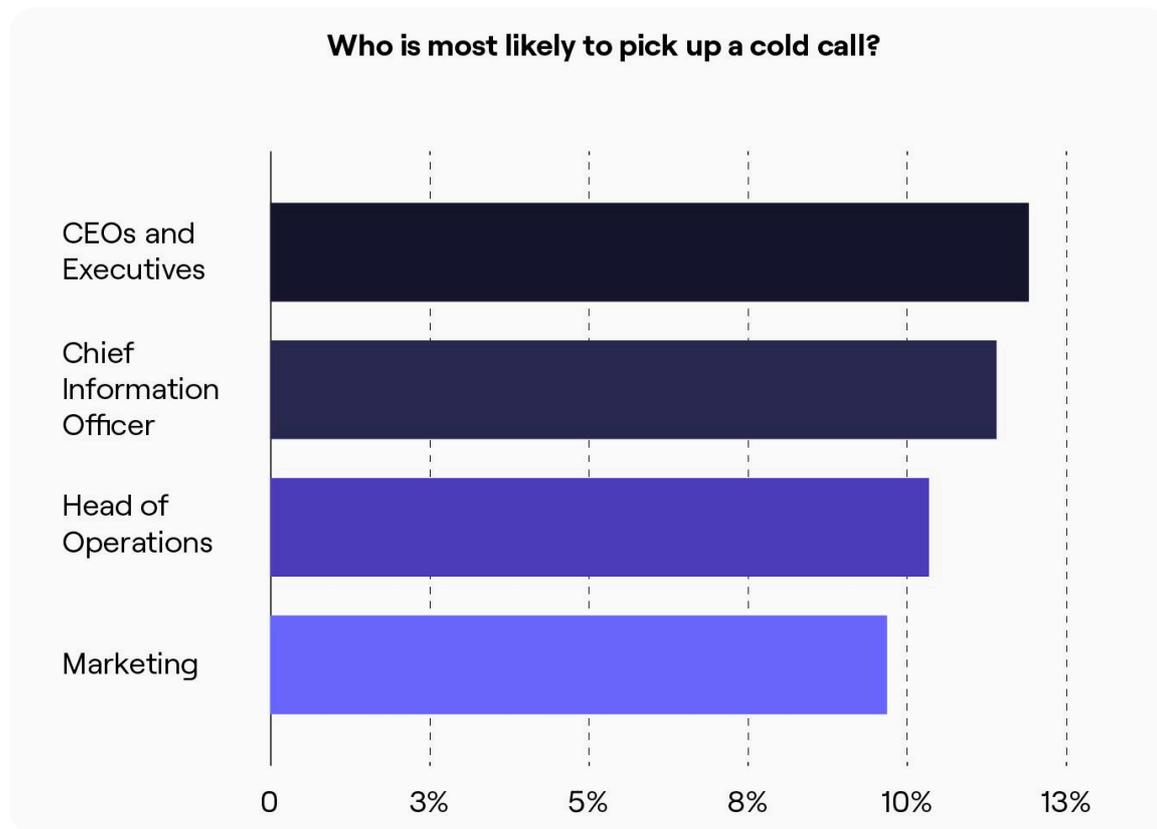
According to our data, CEOs are most likely to pick up and respond to a business call.

Naturally, we were intrigued to find out why this might be the case.

And of course – the all-important question on how to even approach this persona in the first place. Read below to discover more 🙌

Results at a Glance

Here's what our research revealed 📌



CEOs and executives came out on top - making up 11.91% of our conversations. This data coincides with data from RAIN Group, which suggests that C-level executives are most receptive to cold calls.

This makes total sense, given that these personas have substantial decision-making power.

David agreed:

“I’m not surprised that CEOs are most likely picking up the phones. They’re entrepreneurs and open-minded individuals.”

“I think the role of the CEO has changed a lot - and so have our perceptions. In today’s world, they’re on the lookout for new ideas, products, or services in order to support the business and take it forward.”

However, because these individuals are going to be busier people, making every second of the conversation with them count, matters - a lot.

So, with that in mind, let’s dive into more.

Cold Calling CEOs

It's clear CEOs are the persona of focus when calling in 2024.

But you might be thinking - where do I even begin? How do I speak to them? They're never going to pick up unidentified calls, are they?

The thing is, they're just like you!

There's a tendency to *overthink* when it comes to calling CEOs. But as [Charlotte Johnson](#), Senior AE at Salesloft, rightly reminded us, they're human!

“A CEO is just a normal person. When I first started as an SDR, I immediately assumed that they're going to be mean, and not give me the time of day on the phone. My parents are CEOs and business owners - and they're incredibly chilled people!”



Chris shared this perspective, speaking from personal experience:



It's best to come with a strong message:

“The thing to remember when calling CEOs is that they are naturally just busier people, so you do have to earn time a little bit more.”

So, what does your plan of action look like?

Well, for Charlotte, it starts with a **high-level, research-based opener!**



👉 Just remember to ensure the challenges are going to resonate with that CEO or C-Suite executive. Otherwise, there's a risk that they'll push you down to someone more junior.

Now...if you don't get through to a CEO straight away - DO NOT PANIC!

Because the bottom-up approach can be powerful, and you'll send a much stronger message if you've built momentum - especially in Tier 1 accounts.

Charlotte said:

“If you start by speaking with more junior people to gather information, you can work yourself to the top. Groundswell means you can go to the people at the top and say **‘I know it's this because I've spoken to your team’**, as opposed to **‘I'm guessing your challenges are this’**.”

“You're going to have a far more compelling conversation, and CEOs will respect sellers who have done their homework.”

Frida Ottosson, Cognism's VP of US Sales, agreed:

“I always advise my team on the bottom-up approach, and cover topics like the organisation characteristics (size, industry), priorities, and what the team(s) below the executives are saying.”



“This allows you to come with a super relevant message to the C-suite executive.”

“How many people you speak to will depend on the account size, but it definitely needs to be more than one, in order to get the full picture.”

“If you can tell the CEO something they need to know now, you’re going to get their attention. Teach them something new that they might not have been aware of – it’s the way you create urgency. Most good CEOs aren’t going to be experts on everything, so they want to be surrounded by people who they can learn from.”

Chris was on the same page:

“The only difference between a seller and a CEO is that the seller has a solution to the problem that the CEO is unaware of yet. So actually, you’re in a stronger position. Your sales representatives know more about how to solve the problem – and this is an incredibly powerful position to be in.”

As was Jack Frimston, one of the Founding Directors at We Have A Meeting:

Chris also said:

“SDRs and AEs need to feel empowered to be experts in their market – that’s a mindset piece. But it’s also coaching the sales reps on the problem you’re solving, how deeply you know it, and how comfortable, therefore, are you to explain it to them in their terms/language.”



CEO research advice

When cold calling CEOs, a bit of research goes a long way.

Here are some top-level factors to consider:

1. Figure out who reports to the CEO - that'll be important for the groundswell approach we mentioned earlier in this article.
2. Study the company's website at great length. Get an idea of the journey, the products, and the potential gaps you could fill and propose in your sales pitch on the call. Where are they based too? Figure out the potential deal breakers.
3. Finally, who are the competitors? Shortlist, and come prepared with value propositions.

Morgan offered some advice on this last point:



Before we move on to the next result, we wanted to leave you with an important reminder:

Don't assume that CEOs or other C-Suite level executives will not pick up the phone. Going in with this perception will set you up for failure.

Morgan said:

"Every training I go into, most of the people say that they get 10 prospecting calls a year. And sometimes not even at all. I was just at a CRO summit, and they love calls."

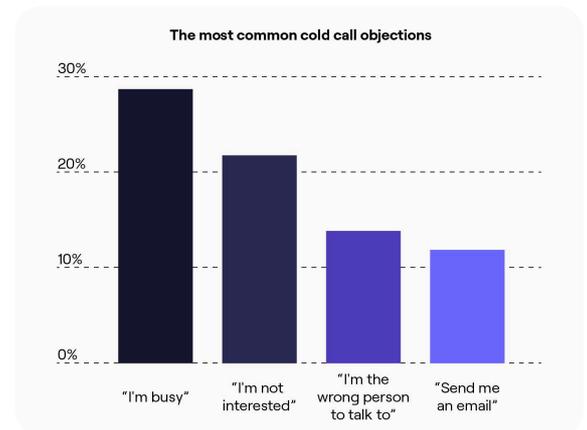
"I think people are intimidated by making the call to a C-suite because they think it's going to go bad. Detach yourself from this."

What Are the Most Common Objections From Cold Calls in 2024?

Results at a Glance

Our data revealed 4 objections that SDRs had to handle on the phone, in order of popularity:

1. I'm busy
2. I'm not interested/Didn't have a problem
3. I'm the wrong person to talk to
3. Send me an email



With these in mind, let's dive into some tactical advice on how you can handle these objections.

Even the smallest tweak or change in your approach can have the biggest difference in the outcome of your future calls.

I'm busy

When a prospect says that they're busy, it could just be a reflex response.

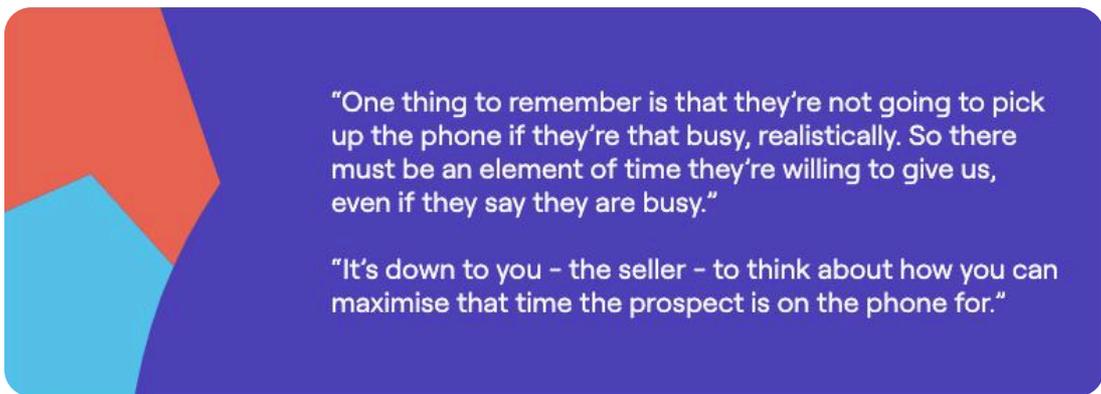
Zac expanded on this:

"This objection could be a defence mechanism. What I've tended to respond with that works, is something like:

I can call you back – does it make sense to sum up why I'm calling you now, and that way, if it's not worth me calling you back, I never have to bother you again?

This response typically buys us that opportunity to hit them with that two or three big picture problem pitch.”

David also offered his two cents regarding reacting to ‘I’m busy’:



“One thing to remember is that they’re not going to pick up the phone if they’re that busy, realistically. So there must be an element of time they’re willing to give us, even if they say they are busy.”

“It’s down to you – the seller – to think about how you can maximise that time the prospect is on the phone for.”

I’m not interested/I don’t have a problem

More often than not, this response is a brush-off and a prospect’s way of saying that they don’t want to talk to you.

And as a matter of fact, we found that this objection led to 30% of our business calls ending.

Now here’s the truth – if you really uncover the problem in the right way, your prospect is not going to say that everything is perfect and great.

Frida explained more:

“It’s on the SDR to educate the market. Especially if you multi-thread, you’re in a powerful position to say: **‘I’ve spoken with X and Y, who have flagged this problem with me.’** You don’t need to just take someone’s word for granted if you’ve penetrated the account in the right way.”

You can also take the consultative approach, and help the prospect uncover the pain for themselves. Sara explained:

“I like to say: **‘Out of curiosity, what are your top three challenges at the minute?’** You’ll actually get very few people that’ll say: ‘My company is perfect, everyone is hitting target!’ And even if they do, say **‘That’s great to hear – however one major problem that I’m hearing from others is xyz.’** What makes this approach even stronger is if you have statistical questions in your back pocket, so you can keep the conversation on track and uncover the problem.”

Lastly, remember that every response on a cold call is not as clear-cut as you might think. Check out this video from Chris, to find out why:

So, if this is the way that a prospect buys, what does that tell us about an objection like 'I'm not interested'?



Chris offered his opinion:

“Get some context on why they’re not interested – is it just right this second, or could things change in three months’ time? This is really high impact for SDRs and AEs that are looking to build pipeline on the phones – especially in a financial market like this, where a greater proportion of people are saying not right now, as they wait for the market to bounce back to normal.”

Reminder: never take a sales objection at face value!

I’m the wrong person to talk to

This was another common reason why cold calls ended – 27% of them in fact.

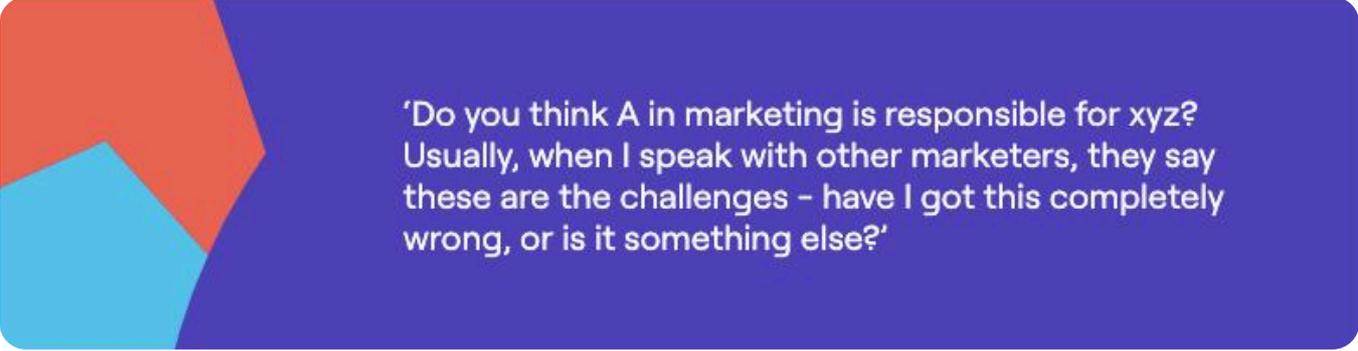
With that being said, you’ve got the power to get a lot of value from the call, even if you’re faced with an objection like this.

Charlotte said why:

“You can gather information even if they’re not the right person, whether it’s on tech stack or company focuses. You can then go to the relevant stakeholder with a stronger and easier conversation.”

She added:

“You can even take it a step further and have stakeholders mapped out before the call – so you can say something like:



‘Do you think A in marketing is responsible for xyz? Usually, when I speak with other marketers, they say these are the challenges – have I got this completely wrong, or is it something else?’

The credibility this approach will earn you is going to be so high. A little bit more effort can have such a huge impact.”

“People’s eyes or ears light up when you say their colleagues’ name – people don’t expect it so it massively separates yourself from the pitch slappers.”

Send me an email

“One of the things that we’re always on the lookout for in sales is that counterfeit yes. Is somebody saying ‘send me an email’ to be nice, because they don’t want to be portrayed as the mean prospect.”



“Here’s one way you can approach things:

Yes absolutely – I can send you an email. But can I be really honest with you? Typically when someone asks me for an email at this point where we’ve had a brief conversation, it’s a nice, polite way of saying they’re not interested. Is that the case here?

You’re getting a temperature check to ensure you and the prospect are on the same page. This means you’ll be in a stronger position to align on the next step and see if they’re genuinely interested in the email.”

Zac added to this:

“Also remember to get super specific on what to include in the email. Ask something along the lines of:

Out of problems A, B, and C, which one would you like me to focus on in the email?

That way, you’re not just sending someone generic information.”

Go-to Frameworks For Objection Handling

You can earn their time and handle the objection in the correct way, as long as you have a plan in place.

Acknowledge, research, challenge and question

This is a cold calling strategy that’s been tried and tested by Charlotte Johnson:

“No matter the objection, you’re able to navigate the prospect’s objection in a logical way with this structure.”

Check it out in action 📌



The feel, felt, found framework

This is David's framework, and its effectiveness has withstood the test of time. He's been using it for the past 10 years.

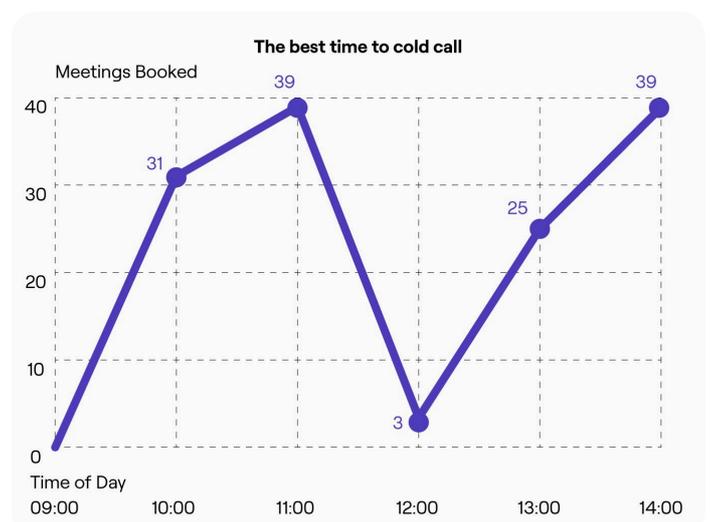
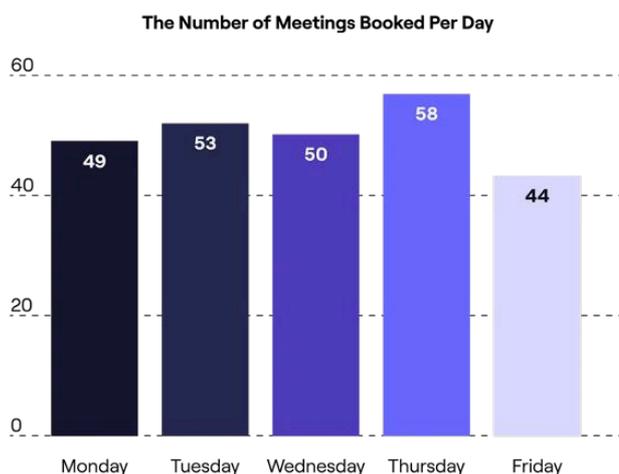
- **Feel:** Start off with empathy - make the prospect feel heard.
- **Felt:** Show that the problem isn't exclusive just to that prospect - it's common. Explain that you've spoken to other prospects who are in the same position as them.

These first two elements build a foundation for you to give a solution - and this is when you can go into the objection handle...

- **Found:** Tell them what prospects typically have found to have been the problem, and the impact this has had either on a persona or organisation level.

What is the Best Day and Time to Cold Call in 2024?

Results at a Glance



What's the best time of day to cold call? What's the second best time of day? It's an ongoing debate!

Data from Outplay in 2023 indicates the perfect time of day to cold call is between 4pm and 5pm.

The highest number of meetings booked were at **11am and 2pm**, where the figure was 39 for both, indicating that the best time of day for cold calling is before and after prospects take their lunch break.

Our data also revealed that Thursday is the best day to cold call, because our team booked the most number of meetings, which was 58. Whereas on Friday, the lowest number of meetings were booked, which was 44.

Now, we're not asking you to take these results as gospel. However, we were curious to find out what our contributors thought of this data. Here are...

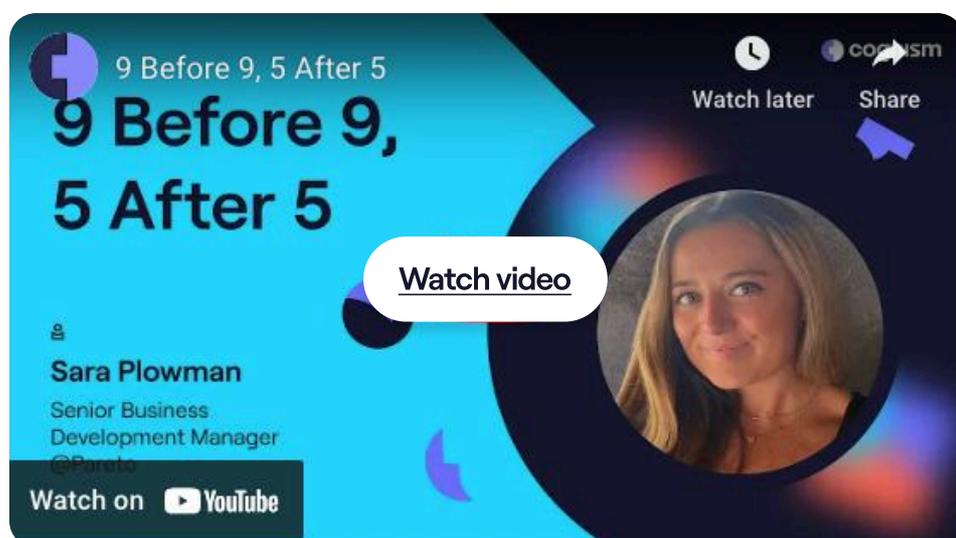
The Insights

Starting off with Charlotte Johnson's take:

"Personally I've found the best day to be a Friday. But Thursday makes sense too - prospects are closer to the weekend - their mood is different."

And when we spoke with Sara, she offered a pretty interesting take on the time of day to cold call - it's one we'll definitely have to get our sales teams to try out for themselves.

Watch the clip below to find out more 



If there's one thing we want you to take away from this data point, it's that it shouldn't encourage you to think about finding the easy way out.

For instance, the difference between the number of meetings booked on Thursday and Friday wasn't a stark one. So we don't want you to take away that you should be calling on one day versus the other.

You **should** be calling every day – but our data might help guide how cold calling fits within your overall prospecting cadence.

If you're looking at a multi-touch outbound approach, this data might help influence when to make calls fit your sales activity.

Charlotte rightly reminded us of the following:

“Make sure you're distributing business calls across the week – don't take data as a hard and fast rule to avoid calling on a certain day.”

Closing Thoughts

And that's it! The State of Cold Calling in 2024.

If there's one thing you take away from reading this, it's that cold calling is a vital channel, and sellers can see great results with it!

Remember – the average cold call success rate has doubled from 2% to 4.8% according to our data. That's a huge shift – now is the time to capitalise on this outbound channel.

Now it's time to put this data to the test.

Now you have access to the data, you need to know how to action it.

Sign up for our next Cold Calling Live to find out how to pitch to your most relevant prospects.



Live Cold Calling Training
With Morgan J Ingram

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A promotional banner for a live training session. It features a dark blue background on the left with white text, and a photograph of Morgan J Ingram on the right. The text includes the title 'Live Cold Calling Training', the speaker's name 'With Morgan J Ingram', and a green 'Sign Up Now' button.

https://www.cognism.com/sdr-zone#cold_calling_live_webinars

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