

# The State of Cold Calling in 2025

## Welcome to Cognism's State of Cold Calling Report 🙌

Being a salesperson has never been easy, but it's becoming harder to achieve success using traditional methods.

Those finding success in sales roles adapt to changing buyer behaviour and, most importantly, use data to their advantage.

We're going to break down:

- The current state of cold calling.
- The opportunities for salespeople to increase success rates.
- How we're going to be approaching cold calling in 2025.



# Cold Calling Report 2025 dashboard



Industry standard cold call success rate

**2.3%**



Cognism's cold call success rate

**6.7%**



Call connected to conversation success rate

**65.6%**



Call back success rate

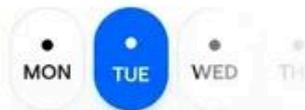
**26.85%**



Optimum number of times to call a prospect

**3**

Best day to cold call



Is the average duration of a cold call in 2025

**93 Seconds**



Best time of day to call

**10am-11am**

## 2024 recap

In 2024, we revealed that cold calls had a success rate of 4.82% (the number of conversations that resulted in a meeting booked) based on data from WHAM (We Have A Meeting).

This proved that phones were still a primary channel for reaching and influencing decision-makers.

But where are we now? Is this still true in 2025?

Strap in! We're going to analyse a lot of data to uncover the state of cold calling and what sellers need to do to excel in the upcoming year.

**The Average  
Cold Call Success Rate  
in 2024**



# Cold calling success rates in 2025

We contacted the WHAM team again this year to check in on their dials, conversations and meetings booked data. Here's what we found:

## Worldwide dials



This success rate is almost half what was achieved just 12 months ago.

Now, there are a lot of contributing reasons as to why this could be:

- The WHAM team has been making a lot more calls from the UK to mainland Europe (we'll break this down a little later, but language and cultural barriers do make a difference!).
- We are looking at data from a much bigger dataset than we did last year (sometimes bigger datasets don't mean better results).
- We're seeing a resurgence in cold calling and phones in general as a channel. The busier the channel, the more competition there is.

The average cold call success rate in 2025



However, one of the other big reasons for the success rate drop could simply be that cold calling is getting harder to crack with traditional sales methods.

Jonty Jewels, Cognism's Senior Mid-Market Sales Manager for EMEA, said:

“This past year has been a tough tech market. Companies are trying to reduce their tech stack and become more efficient. The appetite to buy software is much less. Which means it's about finding the right people who are still buying at the right time.”



Keep reading; we'll explain how later in this report!

Prefer to listen to our report findings? Click to watch Jonty explain!



## How many times does it take to reach a prospect by phone?

As you can see from the data, there's a huge chance you'll get to have a conversation with your prospect on call no.1.

The reality is that most people who are willing to answer unfamiliar numbers will answer if they're free. And those who aren't ... won't!

So, after a certain number of calls to catch prospects at a convenient time, you'll have diminishing returns.

Let's break that down:

1. Call 1 to Call 2: A drop of 73%.
2. Call 2 to Call 3: Another drop of 60%.
3. After Call 3: The drop becomes progressively steeper.
4. Calls 7 to 10: Conversations per call are only in double digits.

### Call to reach a Prospect

Call List No.	Record Count
1	18541
2	5079
3	2023
4	995
5	450
6	185
7	101
8	55
9	34
10	18

## So when do you call it quits trying to reach someone?

Based on this data, your optimum number of calls is 3, as that's 93% of the total number of conversations had by call 3.

However, if you're sure that you can help the person you're trying to reach, and are keen to get them on the phone, then calling up to 5 times will get you 98.6% of the total conversations.

But beyond this point, the diminishing returns don't make many more calls worthwhile.

## How long is the average cold call?

Last year, the average cold call lasted around 83 seconds. Which isn't very long!

According to WHAM, this has actually increased by 10 seconds over the last year, with cold calls in 2025 lasting on average around 93 seconds.

While 10 seconds on one call might not sound like it makes a whole lot of difference, 10 seconds on average on all cold calls adds up.

Average cold call length



This suggests that while the market is tough, the people engaging in conversations are still engaged, if not more so than last year.

Jason Bay, CEO and Founder of Outbound Squad, says:

“Only 10% of calls make it past 2 minutes. So, really the first 60 seconds is exactly what you want to nail... I need to make it really hard to not want to hear what I have to say because I’m working with their peers, and I’m showing that I researched their problem. That’s really hard to say no to.”



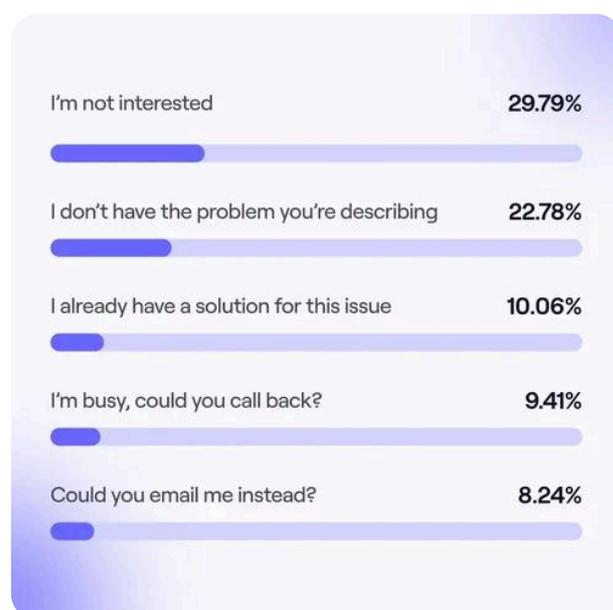
## What is the most common cold call objection?

Anyone who works in sales, especially when cold calling, will face some objections.

But what are the most common ones to prepare for?

According to the WHAM data, these are the top 5 objections:

Some of these objections might feel quite hard to turn around. But here are some things you could say, according to these experts.



# I'm not interested

Sara Uy suggests a good response to this objection is:

“You don't have to be interested right now—most of my clients weren't at first. Can I quickly share why I'm calling, and you can let me know if it's relevant?”

# I don't have the problem you're describing

Jason Bay's approach to this objection is:

“Use 'context + question' to pivot back to understanding their perspective.”

“For example, 'Got it! A lot of companies tell me that initially. But when we looked closer, we noticed X was impacting them. I'm curious, how are you currently approaching [relevant process/problem]?'”

# I'm busy, could you call back another time?

Now this one is tricky, as it could be a brush off... but it could equally be a legitimate request to call back at a more convenient time.

Sara Uy says:

“Stay composed and attempt to secure a small window.”

“Totally understand you’re busy—I’d hate to interrupt your day. Can I take 25 seconds to share why I called, and if it’s not relevant, I’ll call back at a better time?”

If your prospect couldn’t spare 25 seconds, they wouldn’t have answered the phone – so hopefully, you can secure even a few seconds of extra time.

## Could you email me instead?

Similarly to the last one, Sara suggests this answer:

“Of course, I’d be happy to send an email! Just so I can make it as useful as possible, what’s the best time to follow up once you’ve had a chance to review?”

Interested in how to respond to more cold call objections? Check out this cold call objection response generator, with tips from sales experts!

The image is a promotional graphic for Cognism's Objection Response Generator. It features a blue gradient background on the left with the Cognism logo (a white square with a right-pointing arrow) and the text 'cognism' in white. Below the logo, the title 'Cognism's Objection Response Generator' is written in large, white, sans-serif font. On the right side, there is a photograph of two men in an office setting. One man is seated at a desk, wearing a headset and looking at a laptop. The other man is standing behind him, pointing at the laptop screen. The overall design is clean and professional.

<https://info.cognism.com/objection-response-generator>

## When is the best day and time to cold call?

Average meetings booked by day of the week



Average meeting booked vs conversations by day of the week



The best day to cold call?

According to the WHAM data, it turns out it's a Tuesday.

With the highest number of bookings being booked on Tuesdays, and the second highest number of conversations happening throughout the week.

It's interesting to note that while Fridays appear to be one of the worst days for booking meetings, they're also one of the best days for having conversations with prospects.

This could indicate less competition from other cold callers or fewer internal company meetings on Fridays, which allows more prospects to answer the phone.

So what about the time of day?

Well, looking at the length of time that cold calls last across the hours of the day, we can see this:

Average talk time (seconds) by hour



View report (Cognism-Average Talk Time)

This suggests that the best time to cold call is between 10am and 11am. Cold calls last the longest during this time, indicating prospects are engaged and willing to have longer conversations.

The next runner-up is between 2pm and 3pm, suggesting good engagement post-lunch.

You see call length nose dive between 7am and 9am, at 12pm, and again at 5pm. All corresponding to times when prospects might not be at their desks – possibly commuting to and from work or out for lunch.

We see this replicated across regions, which raises an important point. While it may be prime time cold calling hours for you, depending on where you're cold calling, you may need to adjust.

Check the timezone of the country you're calling and try to prioritise between 10-11am and 2-3pm where they are.

Another important note to make at this point is that just because this day and time works for WHAM doesn't mean you'll have the same result.

We suggest you look at your own data to find the best day and time of day for your own regions and personas!

Okay, now that we have all the 2025 data and stats collected and shared with you, we have some more juicy info to share.

## Is cold calling getting harder?

We all know that B2B buyer behaviour has changed. Salespeople used to be the sole point of contact for buyers to get information on their products.

But that's just not the case anymore. Also, buyers generally **prefer** to get their information from online sources or peers versus salespeople. Because, well...they trust it more.

Often, there's a disconnect between the seller's and the buyer's objectives.

Sellers want to get a meeting booked to fulfill their quota. And buyers want to get the best tool or deal for the problem they're trying to solve.

Jonty says:

“The main problem is the lack of personalisation. When people spray and pray, stakeholders have a bad experience, and they judge future sales interactions based on that.”

“If you start your day with a generic pitch, the next few calls will be dismissed because of the first impression that all outreach lacks value.”

Jason Bay adds:

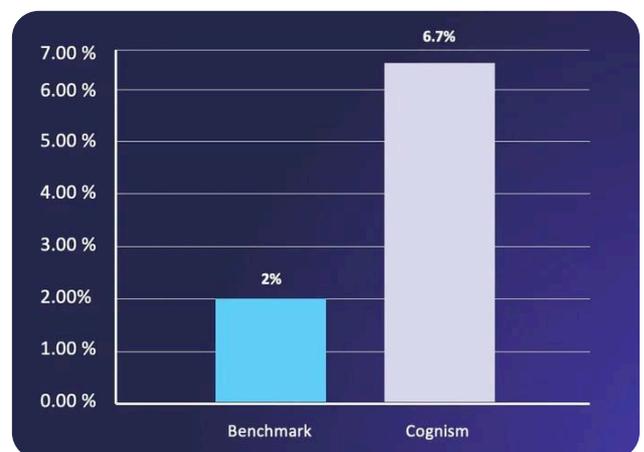
“The buying landscape has changed a lot. The buyer is more educated than they’ve ever been. They’ve been burned more times than ever before.”

“And not to mention, in every SaaS category... there are tons of people who do everything now. So there’s a lot of competition. That makes me more reluctant as a buyer to take meetings, and it makes me more reluctant to switch.”

And this is reflected in cold call success rates. Similar to the results from the WHAM team, the industry standard for cold call success rates is around 2%.

But it’s worth mentioning at this stage that this isn’t what we’re seeing at Cognism. In fact, our success rates have been closer to 7%, 6.7% to be exact.

Which to us suggests that there’s still just as much – if not more – opportunity in cold calling as an outbound channel. But it comes down to how you use it.



Why is this? We’re here to explain!

# Why Cognism's success rate is higher than the industry average



## The cold calling philosophy that works in 2025

Cognism's old cold call approach is very different from what we do now. We used to rely on more 'spray and pray' methods, lacking real data insights to guide us.

But that has changed over the past year or so, and as a direct result, we've seen a huge jump in results.

Essentially, it comes down to quality over quantity. For example, using data to call the right people at the right time with the right message and solution to solve their problem.

We now prioritise:

- Targeted prospecting.
- Personalisation and relevance.
- Strategic multithreading.
- Incentivising the behaviour we want from sales reps.
- Dynamic prioritisation.
- Regional and cultural adaptation.

All this boils down to putting the prospect and their experience during the sales cycle first.

# Incentivising reps to have quality conversations

The first important thing to share is that Cognism reps aren't incentivised on the quantity of conversations. Hammering the phones, especially with a spray-and-pray approach, just doesn't get results like it used to.

Zac Thompson, Founding Director of WHAM, says:

“It's all about how the system is set up. If you base quota on the number of meetings booked, you'll get loads of meetings, but reps aren't incentivised to care if they show up. Basing quota on meetings attended is more likely to get reps to focus on quality.”



“We would rather have fewer meetings but a high attendance rate.”

Jonty adds:

“We didn't used to be tight on what seniority reps booked meetings with, what industry they were in or if it was a small business. Which meant we got loads of meetings.”

“But often they were with organisations we couldn’t sell to, someone in the wrong department, or someone not senior enough to push the buying decision.”

“The new way is more personalised, about offering value to prospects, and generally about quality outreach.”

In other words, our reps are now incentivised based on quality conversations and their impact on the funnel. Which is a longer-term view compared to our previous incentive structure.

For example, if an account that a rep has been working comes in, they’re rewarded with commission. This means they have a direct link to revenue and want their prospects to attend meetings and ultimately sign deals.

Reps want to find a better match between what we do and the kinds of people we best serve, as this is their best chance of earning extra commission.

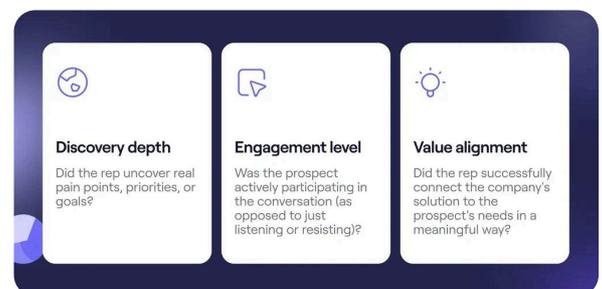
Jonty says:

“This means reps are more involved throughout the buyer journey and are focused on quality.”

The most important part of an initial cold call then becomes identifying a need within the prospect.

A quality conversation involves more than just time on the phone or the number of questions asked. It must include key components such as:

A great sales call isn’t about ticking off questions on a checklist—it’s about whether you’re making the prospect feel heard, understood, and confident that they’ve found the right partner.



The “activity for activity’s sake” mindset, where reps are rewarded simply for hitting high call volumes, sending a certain number of emails, or booking meetings, doesn’t often lead to meaningful opportunities.

Low-value interactions can hurt both the customer experience and rep morale.

**Incentivise your sales team to have quality conversations**

cognism

Incentivise the behaviour you want your reps to take when cold calling. In 2018 we targeted our SDRs on the # of meetings booked which resulted in low quality leads and a leaky funnel...

Fast forward to 2024..

Qualified meeting generation + Multi-threading mastery + Revenue based “kicker” = **2x higher in conversion rates**

## A tight ICP (the list is your strategy!)

One of the historic problems with cold calling is that reps were desperately trying to hit their call quota, and so they’d end up calling people who didn’t quite fit the bill.

When instead, having a tight ICP definition and sticking to it, actually means you’re more likely to have positive conversations with prospects as they’re people you are more likely to be able to help.

Catherine, VP of Sales Development at Cognism says:

“Your ICP is your north star in outbound sales. If you stray too far from it, you’re not just burning time—you’re burning trust with prospects who don’t need what you’re selling.”



A strong ICP helps sales teams focus on the accounts and individuals most likely to see value in their solution, resulting in better conversations, faster deal cycles, and higher win rates.

But ICP definitions have to come from the top down.

Business leaders need to reverse-engineer the common characteristics of customers who:

- Generate the highest revenue.
- Have the shortest time-to-value.
- Have the lowest churn rates or longest lifetime value.
- Are the easiest to work with from a customer success perspective.

And communicate this to reps.

For example, here are some parameters our reps adhere to when cold calling:



**Cognism's ICP:**

- ✓ 250-1000 headcount (with a sales team)
- ✓ In a region we serve
- ✓ Technology and SaaS
- ✓ Has just expanded or hired new reps
- ✓ In marketing, sales or revops
- ✓ In a senior position
- ✓ Uses tech that intergrates with Cognism

By identifying patterns in your best accounts, you can build an ICP based on real-world data instead of guesses.

Catherine adds:

**“The ICP isn’t just a static list of accounts—it’s a living, breathing framework that evolves as the market changes. The companies that succeed in outbound are the ones that regularly test, validate, and refine their ICP.”**

# Understand and define your ‘power line’

Power lines are the lines of influence and authority within an organisation that connect the stakeholders involved in buying decisions.

For example, decision-makers who have the final authority to approve or reject a purchase or influencers who shape the decision but may not hold ultimate power.

Sales reps need to be able to identify and engage with all relevant power lines within an account. That helps them build consensus and avoid sales conversations going cold due to a lack of momentum or involvement from important people.

Jonathan Ilett, VP of Global Sales said:

“In every deal, there are visible decision-makers and invisible power lines. If you don’t map them, you’ll end up blindsided by someone you didn’t even know was part of the process.”

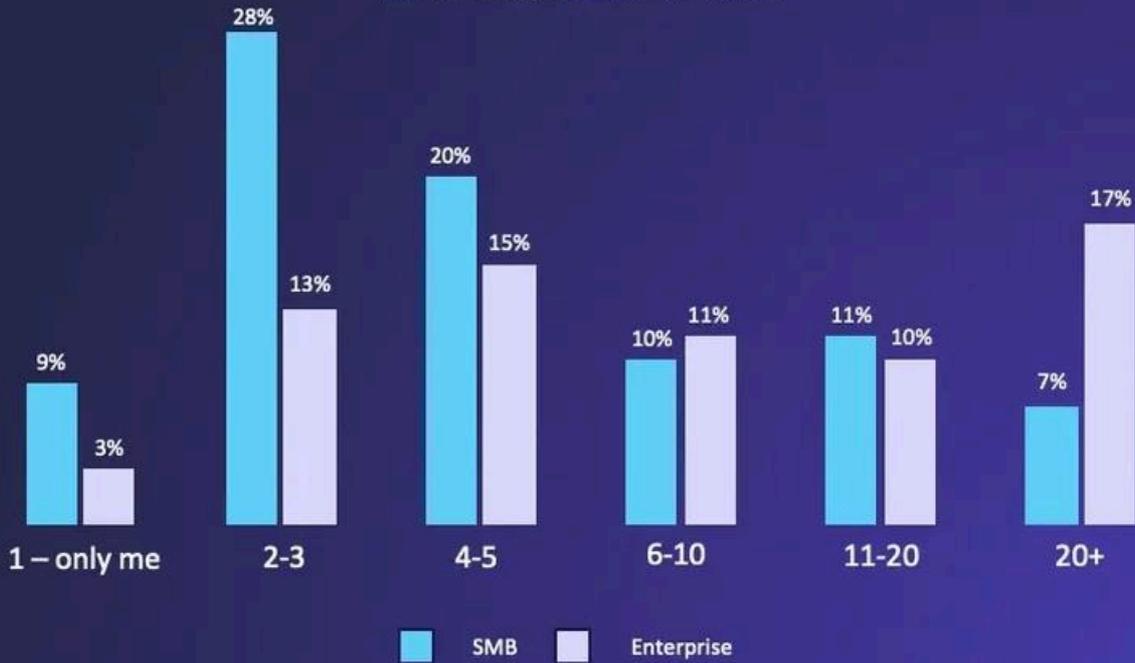
“If you’re only speaking to one person, you’re not running an outbound play—you’re gambling. A deal can fall apart because you didn’t see the power line to the real decision-maker.”



The more people within the power lines that you can involve and get moving in the same direction, the more likely the deal is to go ahead.

This is especially important as company sizes get larger as there are more stakeholders who need to sign off on purchases.

Number of People Involved in Purchases



Jon says:

“We can use past data to see how many people we have needed to be in a deal for it to succeed and use that as a benchmark for how many people we should involve in future deals with similar company sizes.”

In fact, our internal data tells us that if we have an enterprise deal, with 10 or more stakeholders involved in the buying process, we have a 30% higher chance of that deal closing.

## Prioritising the correct mobile number

Having the correct contact data is the difference between a bunch of unconnected calls and wasted time and a soaring success rate.

Not to mention rep morale! There's nothing worse than stale data that leads to disconnected numbers or, worse, to the wrong person.

Joe Stubbs, Sales Director UK said:

“When SDRs are spinning their wheels trying to get access to the right mobiles or just enough mobiles to make their calls for the day, that can be really frustrating and tough.”

“Equipping your teams with the right data, including mobile numbers, is critical.”

Now, we know that cold calling mobile numbers can be controversial. However, if you're cold calling someone you believe you can genuinely help, and offer real value during the call, you're not as likely to be greeted with a negative response.

Jason Bay says:

“If I'm not calling mobile phones, I'm going to have a very, very low percentage pickup rate, probably sub 1%, and I'm going to have to work through an office person or gatekeeper who can shut me down.”

“You're going to quadruple, 5x, 10x your pickup rates and get more at-bats just by using cell phones.”

When it comes to calling mobiles, it's all the more important to know you're calling someone you believe you can help.

This is where having a data-driven approach is going to pay off.

Catherine said:

“Cognism SDRs are given a book of business which has the accounts within their territories already broken down into company size, industry and seniority.”

“This is then overlaid with intent signals, such as funding rounds, new hires, expanding sales teams and more. This is continuously updated to ensure reps have the most up-to-date list of priority accounts to call.”

Reps can then find their mobile number and give them a call with relevant insights to make their outreach as personalised and valuable as possible.

# Use the phone across the entire deal to multi-thread

The phone can be a critical tool throughout the entire sales process to effectively multi-thread within accounts.

Why?

Because it's one of the most direct and human ways to engage with stakeholders.

It's the easiest channel on which to build rapport, gauge pain points, and uncover power lines.

For the Cognism team, the phone isn't just for prospecting—it's a multi-threading tool that can help sales reps engage multiple stakeholders, align decision-makers, and keep deals moving forward.

While email and LinkedIn are valuable tools, they often lack the immediacy and personal touch required to reach busy decision-makers or engage new stakeholders.

Catherine says:

“The phone cuts through the noise. If you're trying to multi-thread using just emails or LinkedIn messages, you're playing the long game. The phone gets you answers in minutes instead of days.”

## Do you need to book a meeting on every call?

What this data has uncovered has left us with a big question:

Does B2B sales need to move in the way that B2B marketing has been doing for a few years now and focus on increasing brand awareness, generating demand and building relationships with possible future buyers?

Jonty says:

“Sales reps need to do more than sell—they need to spark curiosity and show prospects what’s possible. That’s how you create demand, not just respond to it.”

“The best sales reps today are also marketers. They know how to use content, social platforms, and technology to engage buyers in ways that feel human and valuable.”

“The future isn’t about sales or marketing—it’s about creating a unified go-to-market strategy where both teams work toward the same goal: earning the buyer’s trust.”

He adds:

“It’s hard because reps are often targeted at booking meetings and short-term rewards, but I think sales has to be a brand awareness activity.”

“If I could call you, it’s valuable for me to be able to convey that if you have X problem then Cognism can help and they can come back to us when it’s a time that they have that problem.”

“It becomes an issue of how can we use sales to warm prospects up over 6-12 months. Which would hopefully lead them to come inbound to us when they’re ready.”

Of course, change like this needs to come from the top down. It’s a complete mindset shift that can only be successful if sales leaders are bought in and set the right expectations for reps.

Zac says:

“When I first started in sales, you didn’t have the split of SDR, BDR, AEs etc. You just did the full 360. Then salespeople were split to be more specialist, but this has resulted in things happening in siloes.”

“Now I think we need to find a way to re-tie everyone back into the long-term buyer journey.”

One way to do this is by measuring the number of calls connected versus the number of conversations had. Retaining the commission opportunity for reps whose prospects later come inbound.

To explore this further, let’s refer back to the data collected by the WHAM team.

Worldwide, 41,936 calls were connected, and 27,513 conversations were had from those connected calls.

This figure represents the massive opportunity available to sales reps to build relationships with their potential future buyers.



Success rate for number  
of calls connected to  
number of conversations

**65.6%**

# The call back

Another change we'd recommend sales making to regular programming is re-assessing the aim of booking a meeting, when instead, you could use a call back as your next touchpoint.

Why?

Because it's less pressure on your prospects. You're reframing your next call as a check-in to see if anything has changed, meaning that you can add value to them rather than pushing a prospect who isn't ready into a product demo.

The WHAM team shared with us that the success rates when booking meetings after a call back significantly jumped compared to the first cold call.



While adding in a call back might feel like you're pushing yourself further away from a conversion, if the prospect isn't actually in a position to make a purchasing decision immediately, you're better off kicking the can down the road to keep the relationship going, rather than being pushy or giving up completely.

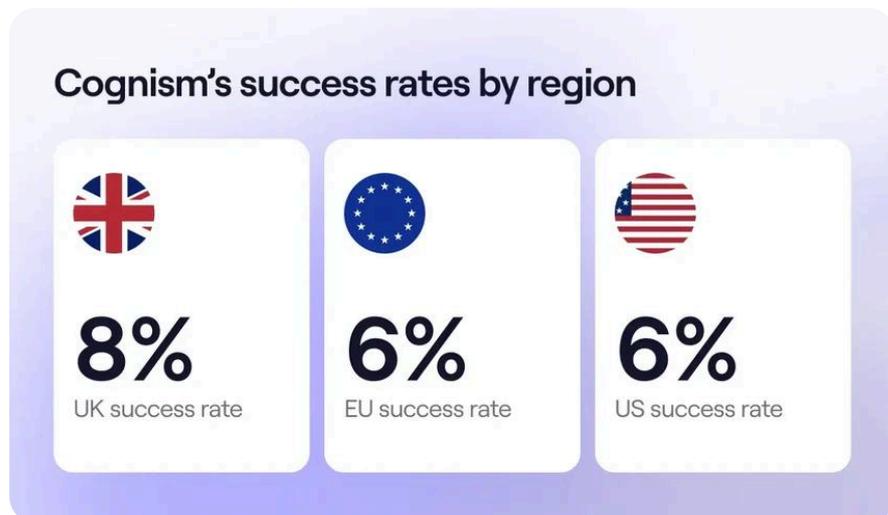
Neil Cameron, Senior Digital Sales and Marketing Advisor at Digital Marketing Institute, says:

“You should focus on building real relationships, not just pipeline for your CRM. This priority, in my opinion, should be on creating lasting relationships over the quick wins. Regularly meaningful interactions are just so important.”



# Cold calling into other regions

We mentioned at the top of this report that Cognism's success rate worldwide is 6.7%. But to share the breakdown across our main regions, it looks a little like this:



One of the other things highlighted by the WHAM data, which we briefly mentioned at the start of this report, is that when businesses expand into new regions, they often use the same reps and playbooks.

From a budget point of view, of course, in the early days of a new region while you're testing the waters, this makes sense. As there's no point investing in a huge new regional sales team off the bat.

However, in order to get impressive success rates in these regions (6–8% rather than the industry 2%!), realistically, you're likely to need some local salespeople. Or at least a localised playbook for the specific region you're in.

This is due to the language and cultural barriers, as well as local knowledge of business needs in new places.

A huge part of being a salesperson is making the person you're speaking to comfortable, feel understood, and reassured that you can relate to their problem.

Bearing in mind that the average length of a cold call is:

So, there's not a lot of time to build that rapport.

Every region needs to have a different strategy around how you open, what information to focus on, and how quickly you get to business based on the expectations of prospects in the region.

Average cold call length



Jack Frimston, Director at WHAM, says:

“There’s going to be a learning curve culturally, how do people respond to cold calls in a new region. For example, I’ve found that Scandinavians tend to be quite short and direct which can make it harder to build a relationship or get into a conversation compared to what I’m used to from the UK.”



This means taking a different approach to your standard UK talk track to break through in Scandinavian countries.

That is why we have localised teams, as they tend to be able to break down any resistance faster than if we had UK reps calling them. We also switch up our sales playbooks to suit each individual place.

Jonty says:

“One reason we have localised teams is so we are calling from local numbers. If you call into the US or EU with a UK number, they’re going to think ‘this is a sales call’ and pick up rates drop.”

“Then there’s the reaction when they hear someone with an unfamiliar accent; they’ll be more confused off the bat as to why someone from the other side of the world is calling.”

“And also the time difference. If you have local reps, they can work the full office hours in sync with prospects.”

By design, the local reps are able to position themselves better to disarm prospects, connect with them, and create sales playbooks that work, rather than a one-size-that-does-not-fit-all.

## How do salespeople need to change their outbound methods to succeed on the phones?

To summarise this report so far, there's a new way to outbound in town. And we're finding it particularly successful (you only need to compare our success rates to industry average to see that...!)

And it's following the prospects' needs and best interests. Because ultimately, they're not going to respond to outdated, traditional methods anymore.

It used to be that you could spend a day cold calling, and eventually, the numbers would work out, and you'd get your quota.

But now, if you're not calling the right people at the right time, with the right solution to solve their problem... you're not going to book meetings.

Which means data driven targeting for who you're going to cold call becomes even more paramount to success.

Accurate, up-to-date data is non-negotiable for effective outreach. And high performing SDRs focus on well-researched, personalised pitches rather than high-volume cold calls.

Sales teams should take the time to prioritise humanising interactions by genuinely seeking to solve problems rather than pushing sales. Building long-term relationships and consider each interaction a step toward future conversions.

# The last word

Based on what we're seeing from the data, we have a prediction.

Sales is going the same way as B2B marketing – meaning demand generation is the way to keep up with changing buyer behaviour.

To succeed in 2025, sales reps must shift their focus from volume to meaningful, data-driven interactions. By leveraging personalisation, adopting a human-centric approach, and integrating technology strategically, cold calling can evolve into a relationship-building tool rather than a transactional one.

Sales is following in the footsteps of recent changes in B2B marketing by embracing demand generation and brand awareness activities as the key to staying aligned with changing buyer behavior.

Just as marketing has moved toward creating awareness and nurturing prospects over time, sales must prioritise sparking curiosity, delivering value, and building trust long before buyers are ready to make a decision.

Just as marketing has moved toward creating awareness and nurturing prospects over time, sales must prioritise sparking curiosity, delivering value, and building trust long before buyers are ready to make a decision.

As Catherine aptly puts it:

**“The best outbound teams know it’s not about how many dials you make but about whether you’re getting the right people to pause, engage, and see value in what you’re saying”.**

By viewing cold calling as a demand-generation activity, sales teams can position themselves not just to book meetings but to leave a lasting impression that brings buyers back when the time is right.