



## **From Personalisation to Precision: The Changing Face of Outbound Sales**

The SaaS sector is fiercely competitive, with companies vying for fleeting moments of their prospects' attention. For startup founders in particular, traditional outbound tactics are proving increasingly inadequate. Over the past few years, outbound sales has seen a marked decline in effectiveness, but what's driven this shift? To understand, we need to trace how cold outreach has evolved.

In its early form, cold outreach operated on a volume-based model, the "spray and pray" approach. It relied on mass messaging in hopes that a small percentage would convert. But as inboxes became cluttered, this method lost its edge. Today, generic messages are easy to dismiss and rarely elicit a response.

To combat this, personalisation became the go-to tactic. By referencing first names or shared interests, sellers aimed to stand out just enough to prompt a reply. And for a while, it worked. Simple mail merges gave the impression of tailored communication, and sales tech evolved to enable faster, surface-level customisation. Salespeople pulled details from social media and used them to craft seemingly bespoke emails.

But the effectiveness of this approach has faded. When every message tries to be personal, none of them truly are. Prospects quickly see through these formulas. The result? Content fatigue. Even with the emergence of AI-generated messages that simulate personalisation at scale, most emails blend into the noise. Ironically, as personalisation became easier, it lost its authenticity.



**Consider this familiar example:**

Subject: Arsenal Fan to Arsenal Fan

Hi [Name],

I saw you're a Arsenal fan - same here!

At [Company], we apply winning strategies to [business challenge], just like Rice does on the field...

What was once clever now feels contrived. Prospects are more aware than ever. They're quick to tune out content that lacks genuine relevance. Recognition isn't the same as resonance. A nod to someone's hobbies or alma mater rarely bridges the gap to real engagement. It's not enough to grab attention; you must offer a reason to keep it.

This is where the phone, an often-overlooked tool, regains importance.

**Why the Phone Still Works**

Unlike email, a well-timed call commands immediate attention. It offers human interaction, something digital outreach often lacks. While an email can be ignored indefinitely, a phone call creates a moment of connection. You hear tone, respond in real time, and build rapport in ways a written message never could.

Sales teams previously moved away from phone-based outreach in favour of high-volume email campaigns, aided by tools that could blast thousands of messages a day. While such approaches can work when executed thoughtfully, through precise segmentation and relevant messaging they require a different skill set. The best outbound email strategies rely on copywriting, data fluency, and behavioural psychology.



Cold calling, on the other hand, demands agility, empathy, and presence. It's live. There are no edits. You have to adapt on the fly.

Email must immediately spotlight a relevant pain and tie it to a compelling outcome. But with a live conversation, discovery unfolds naturally. Skilled callers ask the right questions and uncover unique insights in the moment, something no mail merge can replicate.

Both approaches share a common requirement: deep understanding of the prospect's world. Referencing their job title or recent post isn't enough. Effective messaging reflects how they operate, the challenges they face, and what success truly looks like in their role. Consider the difference between saying, "I saw you studied at Ohio State," versus, "I heard your team just expanded into EMEA, how's that impacting your lead distribution?" One is superficial, the other shows real awareness.

### **Start-ups Aren't Unicorns**

Much of today's outbound playbook traces back to Predictable Revenue, the framework that outlined how Unicorns scale their sales engines. Many start-ups have tried to copy it, often with disappointing results.

The mistake lies in applying an enterprise model to a start-up context. Unicorns succeeded with a strong product-market fit, established brand recognition, and a massive addressable market. An assembly-line sales structure, with SDRs booking meetings for AEs, made sense at scale. But most start-ups don't have the same advantages.

Too often, founders assume outbound sales is simply about plugging in SDRs and watching the pipeline grow. But outbound only works when the message resonates. If the product doesn't address a clear, urgent need, no amount of process can compensate. Venture funding doesn't equal market demand. Investors buy potential; prospects buy outcomes.



Without clarity on the ideal customer, a deep grasp of their pain, and a clear reason to act, outbound teams stall. The issue isn't the model. It's misalignment between product, message, and market.

### **Where Outbound Goes Next**

Sales development has matured. The industry is learning that templated approaches and scalable personalisation alone aren't enough. To cut through, sellers need to return to fundamentals: insight over gimmick, relevance overreach, curiosity over convenience.

Future success will depend on approaching outbound like a consultant would, not a marketer. The winners will be those who demonstrate they get the prospect: their pressures, goals, and day-to-day realities. That might mean fewer messages, but ones that truly matter.

In an age where AI can mimic personalisation, the only true differentiator is genuine insight. That, and the courage to pick up the phone and have a real conversation.

Outbound is no longer about quantity. It's about quality, not just in messaging, but in intent. The sellers who thrive in this new era will be the ones who lead with understanding, not tactics. That's where real conversations and real conversions begin.