

The 2020 Sales Prospecting Performance Report

Actionable Research to Build Your Sales Pipeline

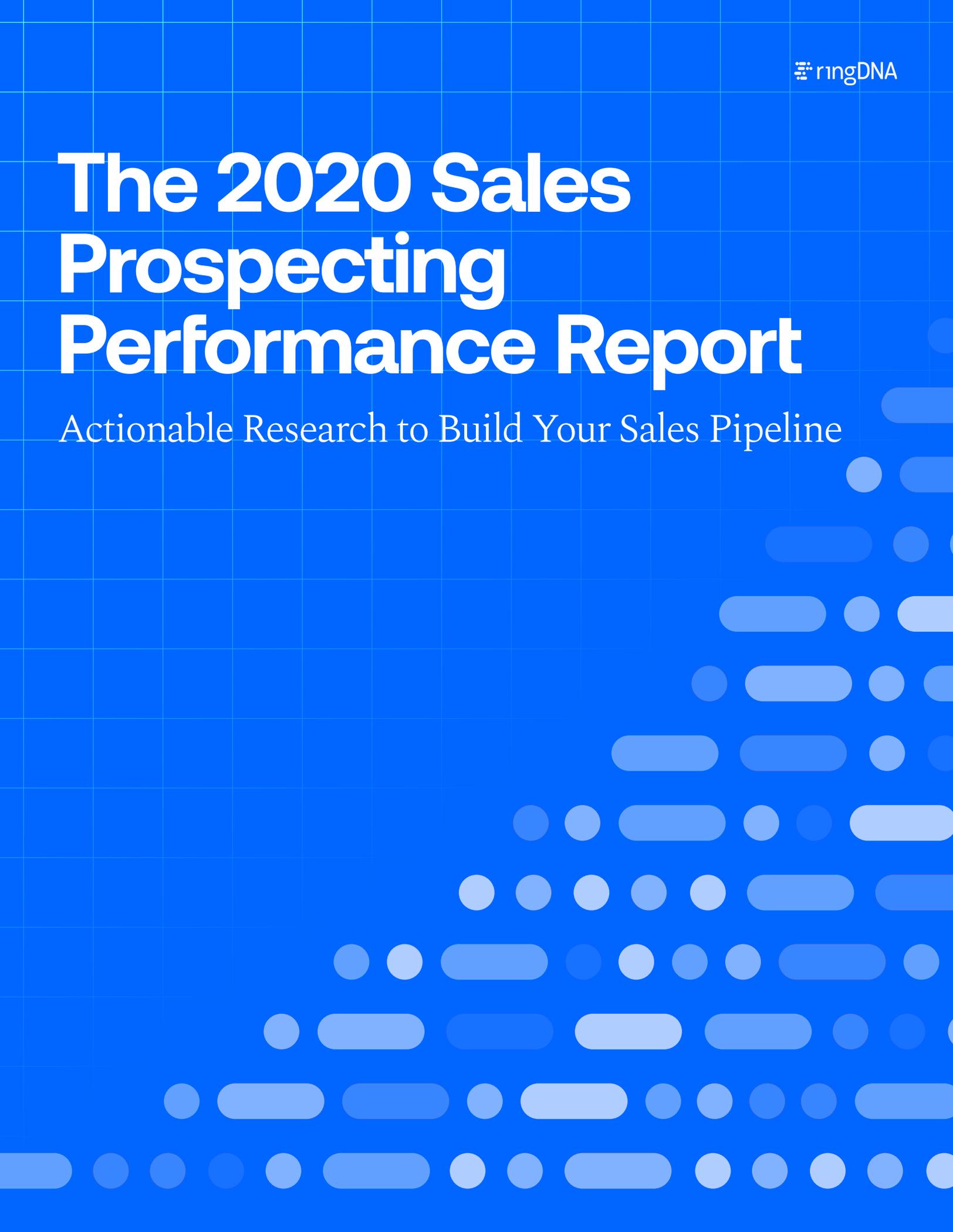


Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Sales Activity Benchmarks	4
The Best Time to Make Sales Calls	5
Capitalizing on Connection Rates of First Outreach	6-7
The Best Time to Send Sales Emails	8
The Best Daily Schedule for Sales Prospecting Performance	9
The Optimal Sales Prospecting Call Length	10-12
Answers Get Longer as Opportunities Get Closer to Closing	13-14
Longer Monologues Are More Successful When Combined with Listening	15
Beyond Calls & Emails	16
Skills to Increase Sales Prospecting Performance	17-18

Introduction

How often should reps follow up with hot leads? When is the best time to email and call? Am I talking too much or asking enough of the right questions?

Experienced sales leaders and reps ask questions like these each day because they are looking for a competitive edge and a way to improve results.

Fortunately, our 2020 Sales Prospecting Report is full of answers. These findings are the result of an AI-aided research analysis of a sample of several hundred thousand Sales Development Rep (SDR) and Account Executive (AE) calls from our database of 130 million sales conversations that reveal insights into how sales teams can effectively engage target customers and how to maximize the outcome of their interactions.

It is important to note that these results are a research project based on a combined, anonymized dataset from different companies in different industries. Individual company

results will vary – these data points are intended to be an informative starting place, and we advise all revenue leaders to test & measure their own processes and conversations to continue to optimize the performance of their teams.

A few of the valuable data points you will find in this book:

- Best times of day to send emails and make phone calls, and how to structure your day as a salesperson around those times.
- AI-powered analysis of the techniques top performing AEs and SDRs use in sales conversations.
- Guidance on how to take control of the structure of your day as a salesperson based on data instead of having the day structured for you.

That's just a small sample of the actionable insights offered in our latest report, and a fraction of the insights that ringDNA customers benefit from.

Sales Activity Benchmarks

First and foremost, sales has always been and will always be a numbers game. The more calls, emails, and messages you send, the more (proportionately) you will receive in return. Then, since more leads are moving through your sales pipeline, you will win more deals and generate more revenue.

TOPO found that the most effective sales sequences contain 12-16 touches spread over 3 to 4 weeks.

However, there is a balance. Sales technology has granted reps the ability to make hundreds of calls and send thousands of messages a day and now teams can perform so much outreach that they have begun to focus purely on numbers, rather than actual quality of their interactions. Reps must walk a fine line. A massive quantity of outreach sacrifices quality, but salespeople should not be so focused on quality that they have no quantity.

To hit your revenue goals, it is important to calculate the volume and frequency of sales activities it takes to reach your target. Start with the goal you aim to hit and work backward. What percentage of leads close? What percentage of calls turn into opportunities? How many calls need to be made per week? Per day? Per hour?

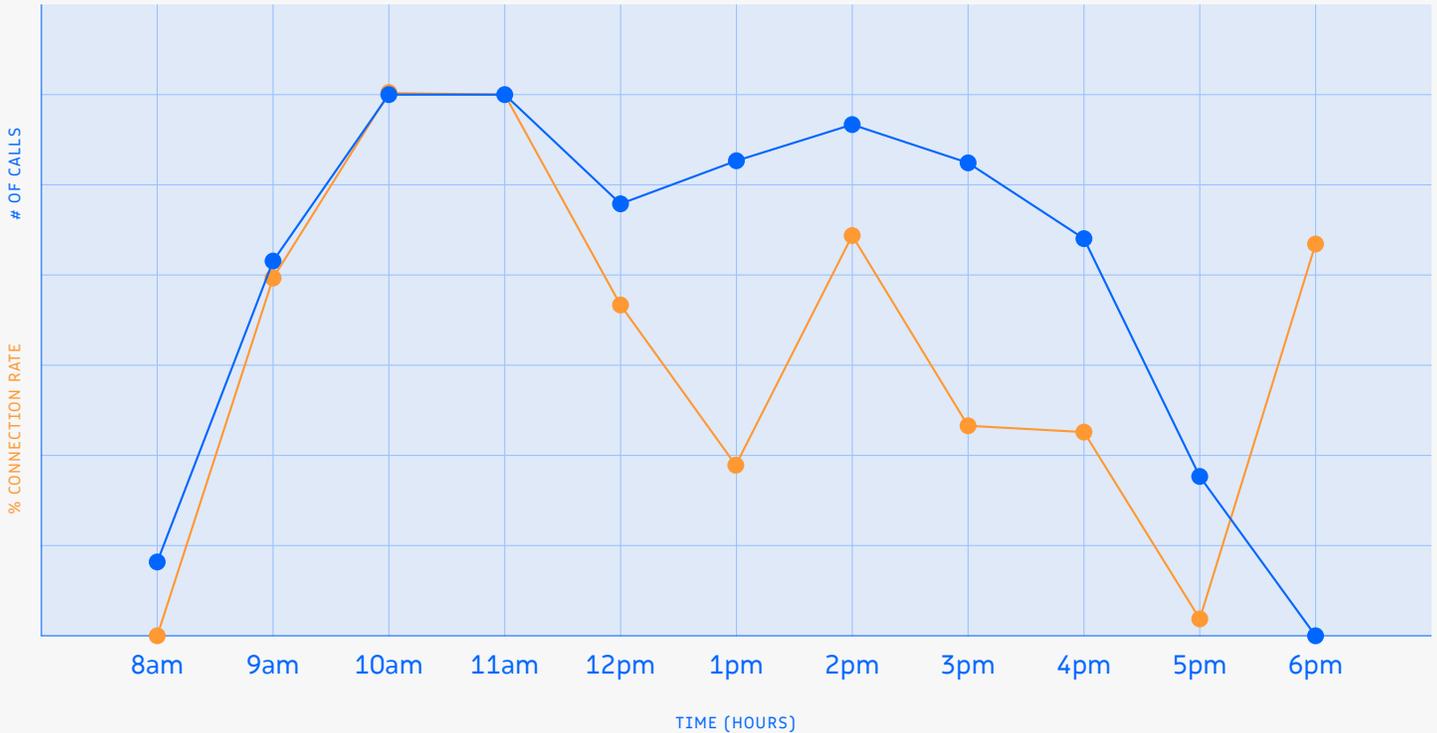
Standard sales benchmark data shows that B2B technology sales reps average 35 dials per day and spend 55 minutes each day speaking with prospects.

We believe this is far too little. Our data shows that a rep that averages 60 dials per day will beat their peers. Dials per day isn't the only leading indicator of pipeline health, and we lay out later in this report the value of call length and some relevant benchmarks.

For best results, sales reps should average 60 dials per day.

The Best Time to Make Sales Calls

You will have more conversations if you make your calls between 10am-3pm.



A key part of a healthy daily call cadence is making intentional, data-driven decisions about what time of day to call. This chart juxtaposes two datasets - one is overall call answer percentage by time of day, the other is overall call volume by time of day.

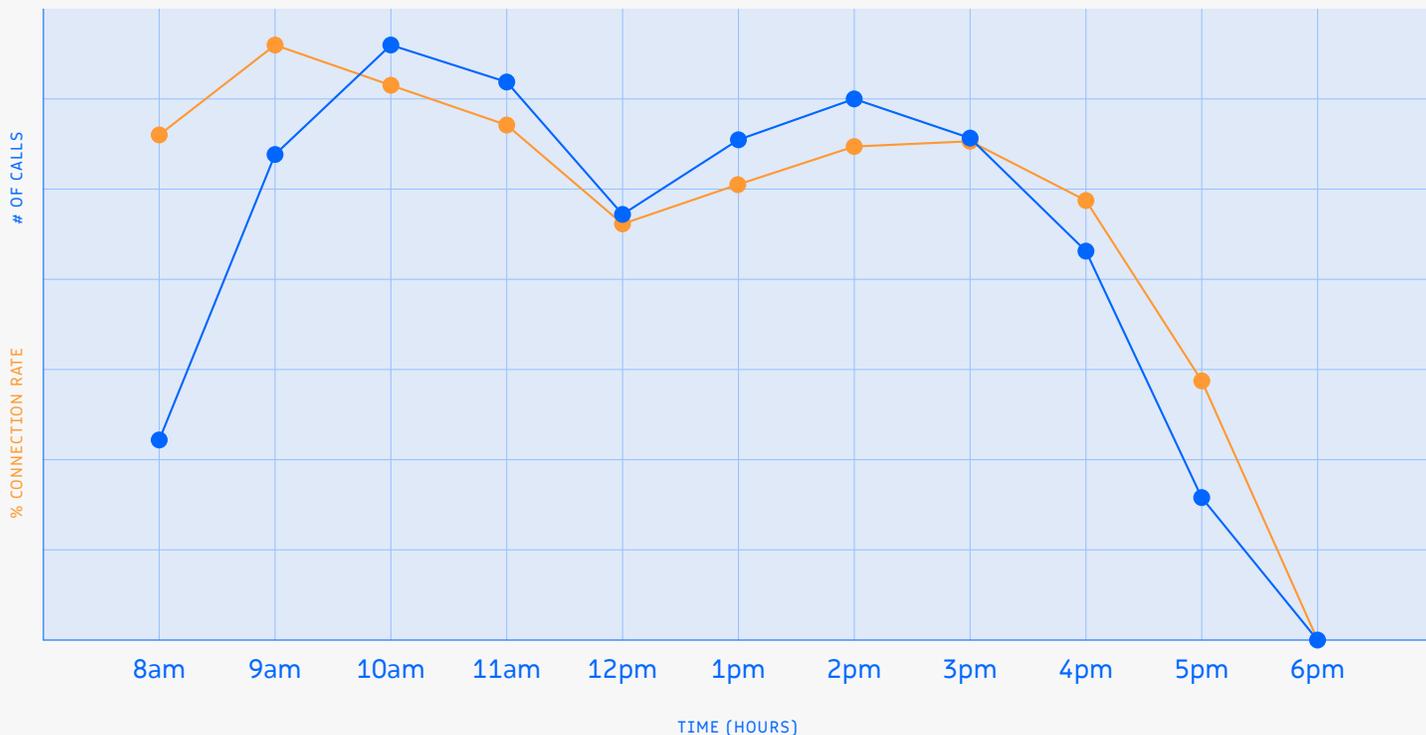
Our sample of ringDNA data shows that call answer rates peak between 10 and 11:30am, with a secondary spike at 2:00pm in the time zone of the call recipient.

To maximize the impact of their dials, we advise reps to structure their day according to these times for making calls.

Sales teams should avoid mid-morning meetings and avoid taking late lunches to capitalize on high answer rates.

A Closer Look at the Best Time to Call

Make more calls in the morning for higher pickup rates.



When we narrow the research sample down to just prospecting calls (first calls made by Account Executives and Sales Development Reps), fascinating competitive gaps emerge. (This chart demonstrates prospecting calls placed by time of day with just prospecting call answer rates by time of day.)

Answer rate at 8am is nearly as high as the peak call volume time at 10am, but not many sales reps take advantage of this, as indicated by the call volume at 8am.

Reps spend the majority of their mornings (in each of their respective time zones) not making calls and not fully capitalizing on the window of high answer rates. They also make many calls right after lunch, when the answer rate is still low. This is not necessarily a huge problem, as people still answer the phone, but when considering this data with email open rate data, afternoon calls may or may not be the best use of time.

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Using data to understand how to optimize sales communication delivery and schedule lead follow-up is extremely important now and will be for many years to come.

But using AI-powered analysis to understand the in-depth conversational techniques that win more deals is truly groundbreaking.

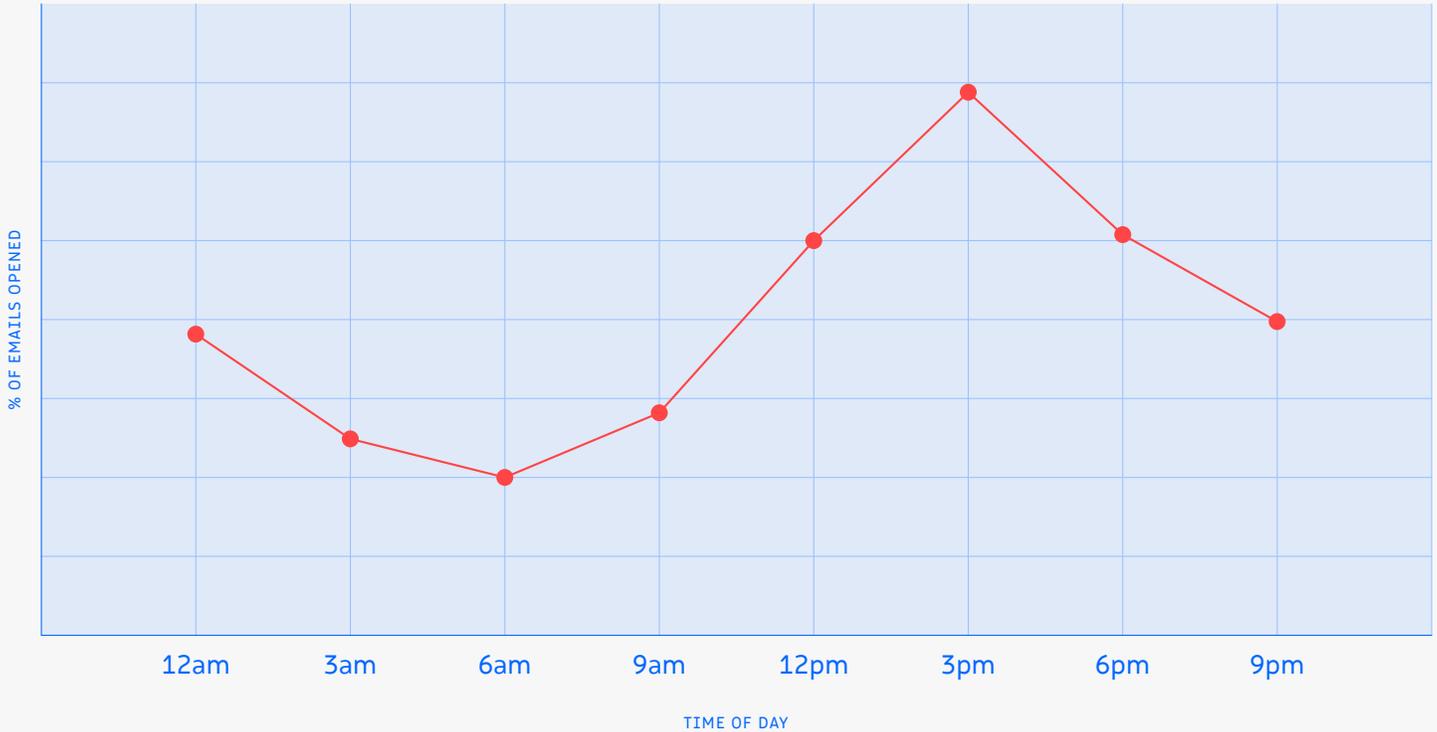
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William Tyree
CMO, ringDNA

The Best Time to Send Sales Emails

Prospects open their emails around 3pm, so send at or before this time to maximize your open rates.



Conveniently, email open rates spike during some of the lower call connection times. **Peak email opens occur around 3pm, and peak send time is between 12 and 6pm** (source: Campaign Monitor).

This means reps send at least half of their emails after prime open times. To properly take advantage of this, reps should send more emails between noon and 3pm, so they can take advantage of the highest openings happening at 3.

The Best Daily Schedule for Sales Prospecting Performance

Since most salespeople don't spend the entire day calling prospects, we recommend that salespeople "time block" their day, meaning schedule half-hour to hour long segments for a specific activity, such as outbound dialing, crafting messaging, or researching leads. This method of productivity allows salespeople to fine-tune their day around these optimal call answer times and their known times of peak productivity.

This method of scheduling the day is supported by psychology. According to the book *Deep Work* by Cal Newport, humans only have about 4 hours of maximum concentration available per day - that doesn't mean we should only work for 4 hours per day, but rather we should schedule hours of "deep work" or maximum focus sprints, and vary that with time spent focusing on less mentally-intensive effort.

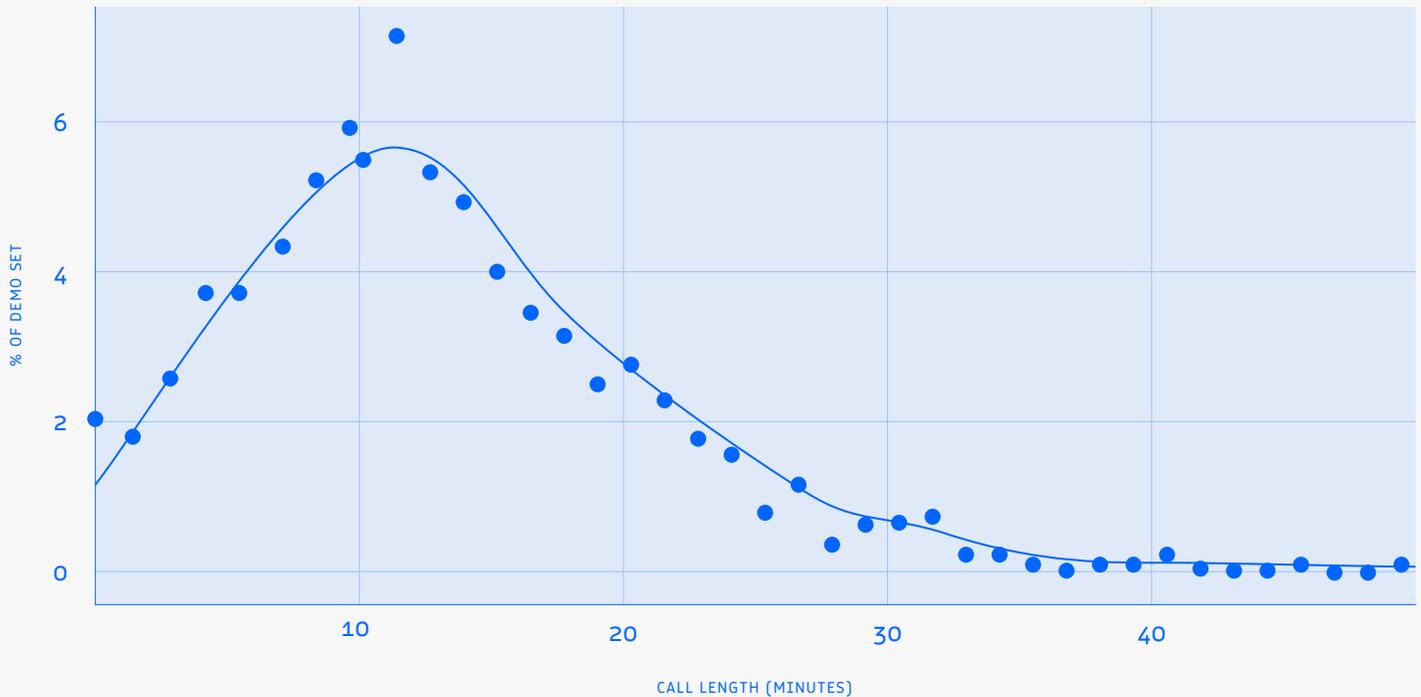
Based on this data, salespeople should schedule their days where their deep work call blocks are centered around optimal pick-up times. This structure ensures reps

are more mentally alert for the cognitively demanding task of conversations with prospects, and less demanding tasks, such as crafting email messages or assessing performance metrics can fit during times when the connection rate drops.

We advise companies to monitor their own connection rates, as answer rates may vary by industry. The global connection rate data mentioned in this report is an informative starting place, and as sales leaders continually monitor the data building from your own sales performance metrics over time, they can optimize the team's call blocks based on their own connection rates. Salespeople who do not optimize their day for performance will fall behind their competition. Optimizing connection rates makes sales reps more efficient, allowing for more conversations with prospects and customers, and less wasted time on no-answer calls and voicemails.

The Optimal Sales Prospecting Call Length

A healthy call to set a demo is 14 minutes long.



While all prospecting calls are not equal, and vary dramatically from industry to industry, and product to product, our data across industries shows that SDR prospecting calls that result in a demo set average 14.3 minutes in length.

Furthermore, charts show that the likelihood of setting a demo on a call increases as the call length reaches 14 minutes. This indicates that it only takes a few minutes to confirm interest and establish a demo on a call. After that is done, reps typically perform

administrative duties like confirming dates and times, collecting email addresses, and gathering qualification information.

Interestingly, after the 14 minute mark, there is a significant decay. The most likely reason for this decay is that call recipients will lose trust in a caller if they feel that caller is wasting their time, or that the call is dragging on. Additionally, this could reflect conversations where the discussion is going long because of confusion on the behalf of some parties to the conversation.

The Optimal Sales Prospecting Call Length

CONTINUED

Either way, it is good to take some advice from classic sales wisdom: never oversell. Once you reach the agreement you are looking for, remain efficient and judicious with your time and words.

This data is interesting but probably not actionable for many companies. Not only does the sample contain a broad spectrum of companies, but it also isn't directly causal, meaning optimizing your conversations for call length will have little to no direct effect on revenue. This is more of an intriguing indicator from across a broad segment of calls for different industries of what a healthy conversation looks like. In this case, the pattern was so pronounced, it is worth noting for managers whose reps struggle with talk time.

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The best sales reps know more than just how to listen. They know when to listen and when it is time for them to speak. Longer monologues in sales conversations are okay, but the best reps balance those extended periods of listening.

Experienced conversationalists have the ability to recognize when a prospect is sharing something valuable and allow them to do so, and combined with the use of silence, are able to gain important information that helps them win.

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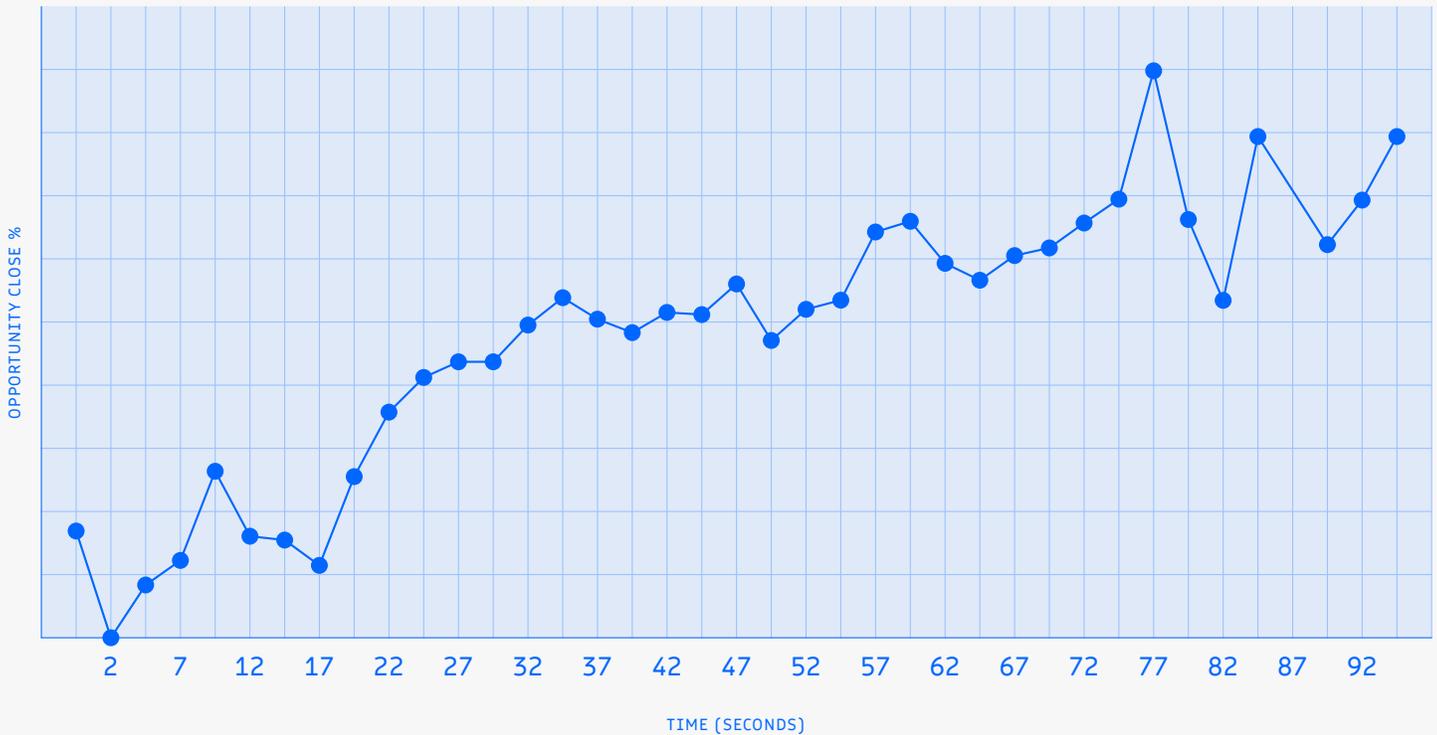


David Masover

B2B Sales Accelerator, David Masover Sales Consulting

Author of *The Salesman's Guide to Dating*, *Mastering Your Sales Process*, and *Managing the Sales Process*

Answers are Longer as Opportunities Get Closer to Closing



Examining data from Account Executives, research shows that answers to questions extend longer and get more detailed as the opportunity moves to close. However, in this case, data is deceiving.

What we are actually seeing is that as opportunities advance through the sales funnel, reps have conversations that contain longer monologues.

This is likely because later in the conversation they have done more research, and they are addressing specific questions or pains that have come up. They have a better understanding of the business, and have more rapport with the buyer.

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Developing great communication skills is certainly essential to achieving great results. Training on those skills is just the start. Managers must coach and review on a regular basis to make certain those skills are being practiced, employed, and improved all the time.

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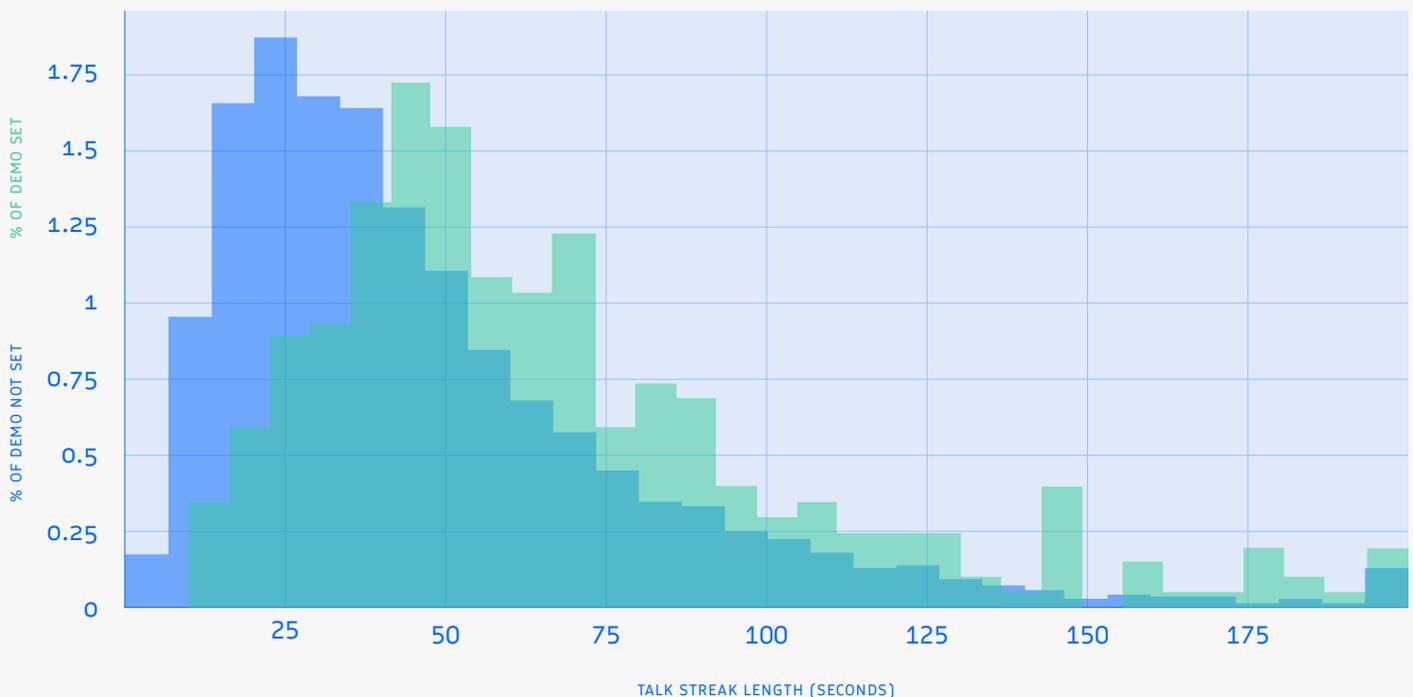
John Doerr

Co-founder & President, RAIN Group

Co-author of WSJ bestseller *Rainmaking Conversations: How to Influence, Persuade, and Sell in Any Situation*, and *Insight Selling: Surprising Research on What Sales Winners Do Differently*

Longer Monologues Are More Successful When Combined with Listening

Calls that result in a demo set contain longest rep talk streaks that average 67 seconds.



ConversationAI data shows that sales development reps with longer monologues are actually more successful at setting demos. This indicates that sales rep to provide a longer, more detailed, and more personalized pitch to book demos.

Again, top reps balance these monologues with extended periods of listening that result in a reduced overall average talk time.

ringDNA examined the longest talk streak within sales calls. Calls that result in demos set contain an average longest rep talk streak that lasts 67 seconds. Call without demos set have a rep talk streak of 47 seconds.

Beyond Calls & Emails

To be the most effective prospecting engine possible it's important to go beyond what happens on the phone or in the inbox. There are several other very important data points to pay attention to in order to maximize prospecting effectiveness.

For ringDNA customers, the most important sales KPIs are often:

1. Conversion rate by response time

- a. The faster you can reach out to inbound leads, the better the chance of converting them into an opportunity.

2. Answer rate for local presence phone calls

- a. For outbound callers, a local area code significantly increases the answer rate.

3. Time between touches

- a. Depending on your industry and organization, this may vary. Experiment with the amount of time (hours or days) between touches in your sales sequence in order to maximize results.

4. Daily rep talk time by number of dials

- a. The ratio of talk time to call volume will help sales managers diagnose struggling reps. If they make many calls, but don't have much talk time, then they aren't connecting with the right people, or are struggling to get prospects to pick up the phone.

If there is high talk time, and low call volume, they may be having trouble qualifying, or are connecting, but not with the right people.

5. Rep talk time by opportunity volume

- a. When you have a rep with low opportunity creation numbers that is spending more time on the phone than average, that person clearly needs more coaching on what conversational techniques to work on.

Skills to Increase Sales Prospecting Performance

Sales managers should also take the necessary steps to properly coach their reps in the skills that they need to succeed. A properly coached and effective rep can

multiply the performance of an entire team. When it comes to sales conversations, these are the skills that matter:

SKILL	% OF SALESPEOPLE WHO SAY IT HAS AN EXTREME/SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT ON CONVERSION RATES
Listening	78%
Engaging at the Right Time	76%
Demonstrating Attention to Detail	74%
Demonstrating Company Reputation/Trust	74%
Demonstrating Industry Knowledge	74%

(source: [2019 Salesforce State of Sales report](#))

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Conversations have always been at the core of human connection. However, understanding what makes a great conversation, and how conversational techniques impact sales, has long been hidden behind the curtain and known only to the best reps. Today, Artificial Intelligence is pulling back that curtain.

The power of AI helps forward thinking teams go far beyond traditional sales coaching, enabling managers to uncover which reps need coaching and how, while surfacing actionable insights, such as the importance of open-ended questions and balancing talk/listen ratio, that help each rep improve their skills and increase meetings booked, opportunities created and revenue won.

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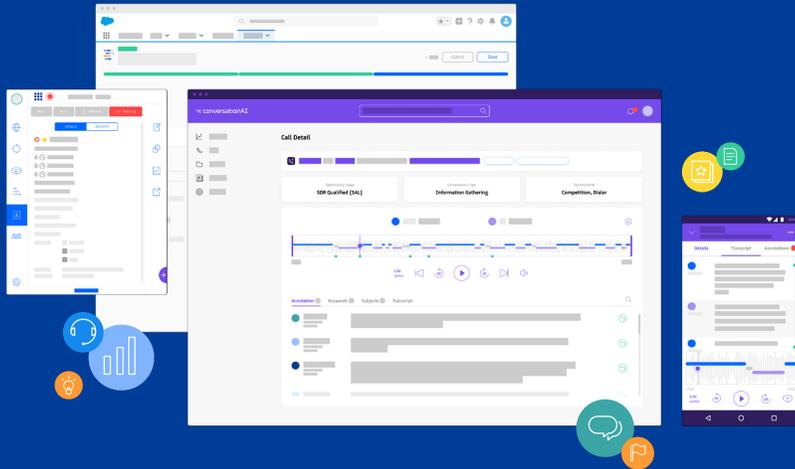


Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, ringDNA

Discover the Sales Experience Platform That Uses AI to Scale Revenue Growth.



POWERING 130 MILLION CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE WORLD



A complete solution for sales engagement, sales playbook execution, performance insight, conversation intelligence and much more.



Sales Productivity

Gain thousands of productivity hours across your entire sales team



Conversation Intelligence

Discover the sales talking points & techniques that win more deals



Sales Playbook Execution

Perfect your emails, calls, & follow-through

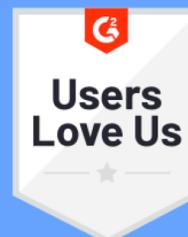


Sales Performance Insight

Real-time performance insights that scale & elevate your entire sales team

Capture 100% of your team's calls, emails, texts, & performance metrics in Salesforce

TRUSTED BY THE WORLD'S BEST SALES TEAMS



The Only Complete AI-Powered Solution for Inbound, Outbound, Sales Management, & Performance Analytics.



WORKS WITH



Gmail

Outlook

zoom

Google Ads



Conversation Intelligence

Scale Your Sales Management

- Easily correlate sales behavior with revenue & other sales outcomes
- Automate call transcription, keyword alerts, performance analytics, & more



Email, Call, & Text Sequencing

Automate Sales Engagement

- Execute your playbook
- Follow-up across your entire sales team
- Automate sales cadences, performance analytics, CRM data capture, & more



Intelligent Dialing

More Productivity & Call Context

- 300% more productivity on inbound & outbound dials
- Automate local area code dialing, scheduling, voicemail drop, analytics, & more



Sales Performance Analytics

Real-Time Insight Into Revenue-Generating Activities

- Actionable team and individual metrics
- Optimize sales operations for more predictable revenue
- Foster a sales coaching culture



Inbound Call Tracking

More Revenue from Inbound Calls

- Discover which marketing efforts drive revenue from inbound calls
- Convert more inbound callers into customers
- Works with Google Ads, G2, and any online or offline source



Thank You

Check out more free resources
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