

The Speed to Lead System

Software & AI Consultant

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If leads are going cold before you get to them, the problem is not lead quality. It's response speed. Research from MIT, InsideSales.com, and Harvard Business Review all point to the same pattern: the business that responds first usually wins the deal. This checklist walks through what the research actually says, a 4 step system to fix your response speed, and ready to use AI prompts to build the whole thing today.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A 2007 study out of MIT's Sloan School of Management, run with InsideSales.com, tracked over 15,000 leads and 100,000 call attempts across six companies. The finding: contacting a lead within 5 minutes makes you 100 times more likely to reach them, and 21 times more likely to qualify them, compared to waiting 30 minutes.

A separate Harvard Business Review analysis of 2.24 million sales leads found that companies contacting a lead within the first hour were nearly 7 times more likely to qualify it than those who waited even 60 minutes. Lead quality drops by roughly 80% after the first 5 minutes.

And yet the average B2B company takes 47 hours to send a first response, according to InsideSales' most recent industry study. That gap between what wins deals and what actually happens is where most revenue quietly leaks out.

THE FOLLOW UP GAP

Speed is half the problem. The other half is persistence. Research on sales follow up consistently shows the same gap: 80% of closed deals require 5 or more touches, but the average rep gives up after just 1.3 attempts.

92% of salespeople quit following up after 4 attempts. But 95% of the leads that eventually convert are reached on the 5th attempt or later. Most of the deals being lost right now are not being lost on quality. They are being lost on someone giving up too early.

It typically takes 8 to 12 touches to convert a cold internet lead into a booked appointment. That is not a sign your leads are bad. That is just how long it takes.

THE 4 STEP SYSTEM

Work through these in order. Each one closes a gap that lets leads go cold.

- 1 Map every place leads come in: DMs, contact forms, listing sites, referrals, phone calls. You cannot respond fast to a channel you are not watching.
 - 2 Write one instant reply per source that confirms receipt and answers the most common first question people ask.
 - 3 Set a response window target under 5 minutes and name who owns each channel during business hours and after hours.
 - 4 Give every reply a next step: a booking link, a proposed call time, or one simple question that keeps the conversation moving while the lead is still warm.
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PROMPTS TO BUILD YOUR SYSTEM

Copy a prompt, fill in the brackets, and paste it into ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini.

WRITE YOUR INSTANT REPLY SCRIPTS

You are a copywriter helping me write instant reply messages for new leads.

My business: [what you sell or the service you offer]

Where leads come from: [list every source, DM, contact form, listing site, referral, etc]

The most common first question people ask: [the question]

Task:

1. Write one short instant reply for each lead source I listed.
2. Each reply should confirm I received their message and answer the common first question in 2 to 3 sentences.
3. Keep the tone [warm and casual OR professional and direct, pick one].
4. End each reply with one clear next step, a question or a link.

Output format:

- One labeled reply per source.

BUILD YOUR FOLLOW UP SEQUENCE

You are a sales operations consultant helping me design a follow up sequence for leads that do not respond right away.

My business: [what you sell]

Average deal size: [\$ amount]

How leads usually go cold: [e.g. they see the price and go quiet, they ask a question and never reply]

Task:

1. Design a follow up sequence of 8 touches spread across 30 days, mixing a check in, a value add, a direct ask, and a break up message.
2. For each touch, give me the timing in days, the channel, and a one sentence goal.
3. Flag which touches are highest leverage if I only have time for half of them.

Output format:

- A numbered list, one line per touch: Day, Channel, Goal.

DIAGNOSE WHERE YOUR LEADS ARE DYING

You are a business operations consultant helping me find the leak in my lead response process.

Here is how leads currently move through my business: [describe your current process step by step, from the moment a lead comes in to the moment they become a customer or go cold]

Task:

1. Identify the single point in this process where leads are most likely going cold.
2. Explain why that point is the leak, based on what I described.
3. Suggest one specific, low effort fix I could put in place this week.

Output format:

- Three short sections: The Leak, Why It Happens, The Fix.

Questions? Reply to the newsletter or reach out via email.

Hector Garcia
@hex.gar · contact@hexgarcia.com