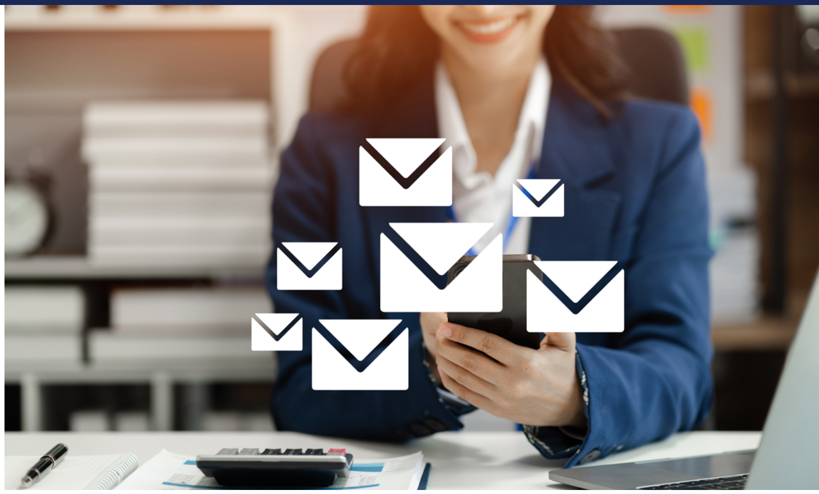
Opening the door: How to start a communications flow with pre-active prospects



You have a list of names — but they're not expecting to hear from you. Whether you're recruiting prospective graduate students, seeking connections with employers for a healthcare system, or initiating B2B conversations, the challenge is the same: How do you start a conversation with someone who doesn't know who isn't yet engaged with your business?

This guide offers a clear roadmap for launching thoughtful, relevant, and effective communications flows to prospects who aren't yet actively engaged. These strategies will help you break through the noise, build credibility, and spark genuine engagement.

PRO TIP!

Build simple personas using input from your team, CRM data, or social listening. Even a rough persona can guide tone, message length, and channel selection.

STEP 1: Understand your prospect.

Before you send a single message, take the time to understand:

What they care about
Are they overwhelmed professionals considering a career change? Are they HR leaders trying to reduce employee burnout? Are they business decision-makers under pressure to hit KPIs?

Where they are in their journey
These individuals are often not actively seeking your solution. They may not even realize they have a problem you can solve. Your first job is to meet them where they are—not where you want them to be.

What language they use
Mirror the tone and language of your audience. Avoid internal jargon. Instead, reflect on the questions they're likely asking themselves.

STEP 2: Craft your first message series.

Your first messages need to build trust, not accomplish your desired conversion action. Focus on relevance, brevity, and value.

Message 1: The "You May Not Know Us" intro

- **Briefly introduce who you are and why you're reaching out.**
- **Make it about them — not your organization.**
- **Offer a soft on-ramp to learn more, like a link to a blog post, success story, or guide.**

Here's an example from the higher education sector: "We know many working professionals are rethinking what's next. That's why we offer flexible grad programs built for busy lives. We thought this guide on 'How to Return to School as a Working Professional' might be helpful — no strings attached."

Message 2: A gentle follow-up.

- Acknowledge that people are busy.
- Add a new piece of value (tip, insight, download).
- End with an easy way to respond or learn more.

Message 3: An invitation to engage.

- Offer something with a low barrier — like a short consultation, webinar, or live Q&A.
- Make it feel personal and relevant.

MESSAGE CHECKLIST

✔ Clear and transparent subject line or intro hook. Tell recipients what is in the message.
✔ Personalization (name, industry, challenge)
✔ Helpful resource or insight
✔ No hard sell
✔ Easy CTA (call to action)

STEP 3: Choose the right channels.

Use a multi-channel approach for the best results. Depending on the industry and audience:

Channel	When to Use
Email	For longer messages, follow-ups, gated content.
LinkedIn	Great for B2B and professional graduate prospects.
Text	Effective for healthcare or higher ed follow-ups (with consent).
Phone call	Best used after digital touchpoints have warmed the lead.
Direct mail	Great for cutting through digital noise.

Want more templates or a free outreach calendar?
Contact us at hello@prospect-cloud.com or visit us at www.prospect-cloud.com.

STEP 4: Optimize for first engagement.

Your primary goal in early outreach is a first signal of interest—a click, a reply, a request for more info.

Tips for optimizing first engagement:

- Use real people as senders—no “marketing@” inboxes.
- Time your messages for your audience (e.g. early mornings for B2B, evenings for adult learners).
- Test subject lines, message formats, and tone.
- Include only one CTA per message (e.g., “Download this,” not “Download + Schedule a Call”).
- Test & Learn: Try A/B testing short vs. long intros, button vs. text links, or different lead magnets to see what resonates.

STEP 5: Build the flow, not just the first message.

Once you see engagement, have a ready-to-go nurture path:

- A follow-up email with a deeper guide or resource.
- An invitation to attend a virtual event or info session.
- A prompt to book a call or Zoom meeting with a real person.
- Retargeting ads (if applicable) to reinforce awareness.

Generating affinity and connection is a slow process – you’re not going to close a sale or generate an application after one message, so it’s important to plan a full comms flow before hitting send on message #1.

Final thoughts

Starting conversations with unengaged prospects is an art and a science.

The key is to:

- Start with empathy.
- Lead with value.
- Use channels strategically.
- Always provide an easy next step.

When done well, this kind of outreach doesn’t feel “cold” — it feels like a helpful tap on the shoulder at just the right moment.