



BONUS INCLUDED

B2B COLD EMAIL

Pre-Flight Checklist

Run this before every campaign launch.

No exceptions.

SECTIONS

The List

Infrastructure

Offer & Copy

Sales Process

Quick Reference Metrics

How to use this checklist

Open this document before every campaign launch — not after. The items are ordered by the sequence in which problems compound: a broken list makes good infrastructure irrelevant; bad infrastructure makes a great offer invisible. Work top to bottom. Every time.

01 — The List

VERIFICATION & CLEANING

- Emails verified — bounce rate target below 2% ([EmailListVerify](#) or MillionVerifier / ZeroBounce)
- List connected to automated daily cleaning ([mailfloss](#))

Optional but recommended if you are sending recurring campaigns to the same list.

- Data fields cleaned — no "Dr.", no MBA/PMP titles in name fields, no pronouns, no emojis, no company descriptions, no all-caps

Run a sample of 20 rows manually before bulk import.

TARGETING & QUALIFICATION

- Qualification step completed — leads scored and non-fits removed before importing to campaign

Same list, same copy, same offer: without this step 1-2% reply rate, with it 4-6%. Do not skip it even when the list feels right.

- List segmented by specific trigger event — not just industry or job title

Examples: recent funding, 3+ open SDR roles, tech stack change, new Head of Growth hired in last 90 days.

- I can articulate exactly why this person is on this list right now

If you cannot answer this in one sentence per segment, the segmentation is not done yet.

- Data sourced from somewhere less saturated than Apollo alone

Alternatives: state license registries, municipal business registries, Sales Navigator + Scrapp, Browse AI for custom scraping.

- Decision-makers only — CEO, founder, CMO, CRO, owner, president

Mid-level managers either forward it to their boss (where it dies) or delete it. Target people who can say yes without an approval chain.

02 — Infrastructure

DOMAINS & MAILBOXES

- Sending domains are completely separate from primary domain

Never risk your main domain. Buy variations: [getcompanyname.com](#), [companyname-hq.com](#). ~\$12/year each.

- 2-3 mailboxes per domain configured

Via Google Workspace (\$6/mailbox) or Microsoft 365.

- Mailbox names look like real people

John Smith, Jane Doe, J. Smith — never "Sales Team," "Info," or "Outreach." Consistent name + domain + email = trust signal.

- [] Sending volume capped at 20-30 emails per mailbox per day

More volume = more inboxes, never more sends per inbox.

AUTHENTICATION & WARMUP

- [] SPF, DKIM, and DMARC configured and aligned on every sending domain

Run mail-tester.com on a test send to confirm all three are passing before launching.

- [] Minimum 3-4 weeks of warmup completed on all mailboxes ([WarmupInbox](#) or [Warmy.io](#))

Do not shortcut this. Impatience here is the single biggest reason campaigns fail before they start.

- [] Google Postmaster score is Green on all sending domains

Yellow = pull the domain from rotation immediately and rehab for 30 days before reactivating. Do not send from it while it is yellow.

- [] mail-tester.com score run on campaign email before launch

Target 8/10 or higher. Anything below 7 needs investigation before sending.

- [] Infrastructure diversified across providers if running 500+ mailboxes

Split: Google + Microsoft + private SMTP. A single-provider setup is one algorithm update away from losing 40-50% inbox placement overnight.

SENDING TOOL

- [] Sending platform configured and tested ([Smartlead](#), [Instantly](#), [Woodpecker.co](#), or [Mail Blaze](#))

- [] Test email sent and received in primary inbox (not promotions or spam)

- [] Unsubscribe handling configured — replies to "remove me" are processed automatically

03 — Offer & Copy

THE OFFER

- I can answer in one sentence: why this ICP, why now, what is my unique angle in this market

If you cannot answer all three, the campaign is not ready.

- The offer includes a specific result, a concrete number, and a timeframe

Bad: "we help teams optimize workflows." Good: "we reduce [metric] by [number] for [type], usually in 2 weeks."

- The offer leads with value, not with a meeting request

A 10-minute walkthrough of a specific fix converts higher than "book a 30-minute discovery call." Lower friction = more yeses.

THE EMAIL

- Email is under 90 words

Count them. If it is over 90, cut — do not summarize.

- Subject line is 3-5 words, lowercase, sounds like an internal email

Examples: "quick question," "your team," "[first name]." Never salesy, never with exclamation marks.

- First sentence is the trigger or observation — not a compliment

"Noticed you hired a Head of Growth last month" beats "I love what you are doing at [company]" every time.

- One CTA at the end — not two, not three

The CTA should be answerable with one word: yes, sure, interested. Never ask them to check their calendar or fill out a form.

- No links in the first touch

Links trigger spam filters and signal mass sending. Save all links for follow-up 2 or later.

- No HTML formatting, no images, no logo, no tracking pixels

Plain text only. It should look like something you would send from your personal Gmail.

- No opt-out language or unsubscribe links in email 1

"Reply STOP to unsubscribe" is a fingerprint ESPs use to identify and filter cold email at scale.

- Spintax applied and manually reviewed for accuracy

AI-generated spintax often inserts phrases that trigger spam filters or do not make grammatical sense. Read every variation.

- Email checked for spam trigger words

Run through a spam checker before launch.

THE SEQUENCE

- Minimum 4 follow-ups scheduled, spaced 3-4 days apart

60% of positive replies come from follow-up 2 or 3. Quitting after 1-2 emails means leaving most of your pipeline on the table.

- Follow-up 2 gives a face-saving out and offers an alternative contact

"Totally understand if timing is off. If there is someone else on your team who handles this, happy to connect with them instead."

- Final email (breakup email) closes cleanly with the door left open

"Last one from me — did not want to assume you were not interested. If [specific pain] ever becomes a priority, feel free to reach back out."

- Each follow-up is shorter than the previous one

Follow-up 3 should be 2-3 sentences maximum.

04 — Sales Process (for high-ticket services)

PRE-CALL

- Two-call structure prepared — discovery call and strategy/close call

Do not try to close five-figure deals on a single 30-minute call. Discovery first, proposal second. Always.

- ROI math calculated for this specific ICP

Example: "Your average client is \$40K LTV. We book 8 meetings a month. If you close 25%, that is 2 new clients, \$80K in revenue. You pay us \$5K. That is a 16x return."

- Three pricing tiers prepared — Standard, Pro (recommended), Premium

Always anchor high. Most people pick the middle option. Never lead with your lowest price.

- Risk reversal defined and ready to present

Without it: ~5% close rate on \$5K+ deals. With it: ~25-30%. Options: money-back guarantee, 30-day pilot, "X meetings or we work free."

CALL 1 — DISCOVERY

- Do not pitch on Call 1

Seriously. No pitch. Ask questions and calculate ROI out loud.

- Questions prepared: current outbound approach, average deal size, CAC, sales cycle length, team size

- Call ends with: "I am going to build a custom plan based on what you told me. Let us talk [specific day]."

CALL 2 — STRATEGY & CLOSE

- Proposal built around their specific numbers from Call 1

Show the math. Do not just claim results.

- Setup fee included and separated from monthly retainer

This front-loads cash and makes clients more committed. People who pay nothing upfront churn at month 2.

- Risk reversal presented clearly before asking for the close

05 — Quick Reference Metrics

METRIC	HEALTHY	WARNING SIGN
Bounce rate	Below 2%	Above 3% — fix the list
Total reply rate	3-5%	Below 1% — check infra + list
Positive reply rate	1-4%	Below 0.5% — fix the offer
% replies from follow-ups	50-65%	Below 30% — extend the sequence
Booking rate (positives → calls)	~30%	Below 15% — fix the setter/reply handling
Close rate on calls	20-30% (with risk reversal)	Below 10% — fix the offer or pitch
Trojan Horse reply rate	10-20% (targeted lists only)	Below 5% — frame may not be genuine
Spam Folder Mining reply rate	20-30%	Below 10% — refine the hook

Quick diagnosis — if something is broken

SYMPTOM	MOST LIKELY CAUSE
Not even getting unsubscribes	Email deliverability — emails not reaching inbox
Getting unsubscribes but no positive replies	List quality — wrong people or wrong timing
Getting positive replies but no meetings	Offer or CTA — ask is too big or unclear
Getting meetings but not closing	Sales process — missing risk reversal or ROI framing
Getting meetings but too few	Volume or follow-up sequence too short
Reply rate was good, now dropping	List fatigue or domain reputation degrading

This checklist is a bonus companion to the Ultimate B2B Cold Email Playbook. For the full strategy behind each item, refer to the playbook.

This is a living document — it updates alongside the playbook. Questions or feedback:
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