

Sun, sea and sales: how to avoid the summer slump

What every sales and marketing team needs to know about the summer slump.

sopro.io



Contents

03

Introduction

04

Attacking a
downturn/Summer
slumps

05

The evidence for the
summer slump

08

What causes
seasonal slumps?

09

What are businesses
doing about the
summer slump?

10

Generating leads
over the summer
slump

12

Closing deals over
the summer slump
(and beyond)

14

How to survive
(and thrive) during
the summer slump

16

Meet Sopro

Introduction

If you work in B2B sales or marketing, the chances are you've heard of the summer slump.

For some, it's a mythical beast: talked about in hushed tones around the coffee machine and joked about on the [#sales-team](#) Slack chat. A spectre lurking in the background, its existence is largely dismissed.

For others, the struggle is real. Each summer brings a noticeable dip in sales and client numbers.

Sales reps sweat over missed targets. Marketing teams feel the heat from a dip in lead volume.

You may think the summer slump is an invented bogeyman designed to scare poorly behaved sales reps. Or you might think it's a nailed-on certainty we can add to the proverbial death and taxes. Either way, it's clear that seasonality is a major factor for many businesses.

Even for those businesses free of seasonal change, any economic downturn raises similar problems:

What is the best way to handle the summer slump?

How do you make sure your business comes through it not only unscathed, but thriving?

Should you hold back on your marketing activity?

Go all out on promotions and discounts?

Carry on as normal?

This report will reveal all.

Attacking a downturn

Following the 2008 global financial crash, brands with the ability to maintain or increase spending saw a

317% 

increase in their share price over the next ten years, compared to the 60% average.

In the 1981 recession, companies that maintained or increased advertising spend over the next four years saw sales

256% 

higher than those that decreased spend.



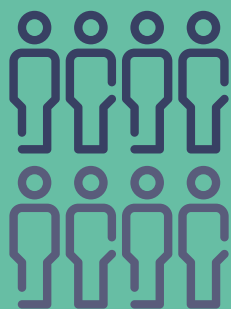
In 1930, Kellogg's used the worst ever recession as a springboard, doubling ad budget to grow revenues by

30% and become the market leader, a position they still enjoy today.

Summer slumps

42%

of Sopro's new clients from the second half of 2021 came from summer prospecting.



Sopro's summer prospecting brought in new clients in **11** of the following 12 months.



Brands that stopped prospecting in July and August saw a

59% decrease in September lead volume.

The evidence for the summer slump

Google Trends

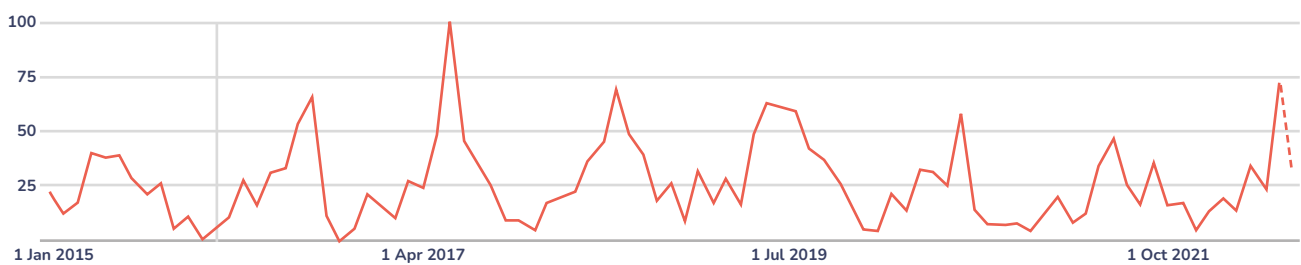
Google handles, on average, 3.8 million searches every single minute across the globe.

That's a lot of searches. Google Trends allows us to tap into that dataset - the largest publicly available market research tool on the planet.

What are people concerned about? When they turn to Google for help, what questions are they asking? How does that change and increase over time?

Searches for **“Summer slump”** since 2015 show a clear spike in interest every June and July.

Interest over time



This suggests that professionals are looking for answers and tactics as they face declining sales around this time.

And the consistency of searches suggests this problem is regular, real, and not going away any time soon.

Survey of B2B businesses

We previously ran a survey of B2B businesses to find out the prevalence and impact of the summer slump.



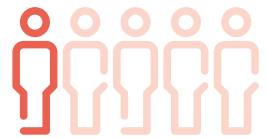
Two-thirds of B2B businesses experience a sales slump over the summer



July and **August** were identified as the worst-hit months



Of the businesses affected, nearly **75%** reported a drop in sales of **20%**



One in five claimed dips of **40%** or more

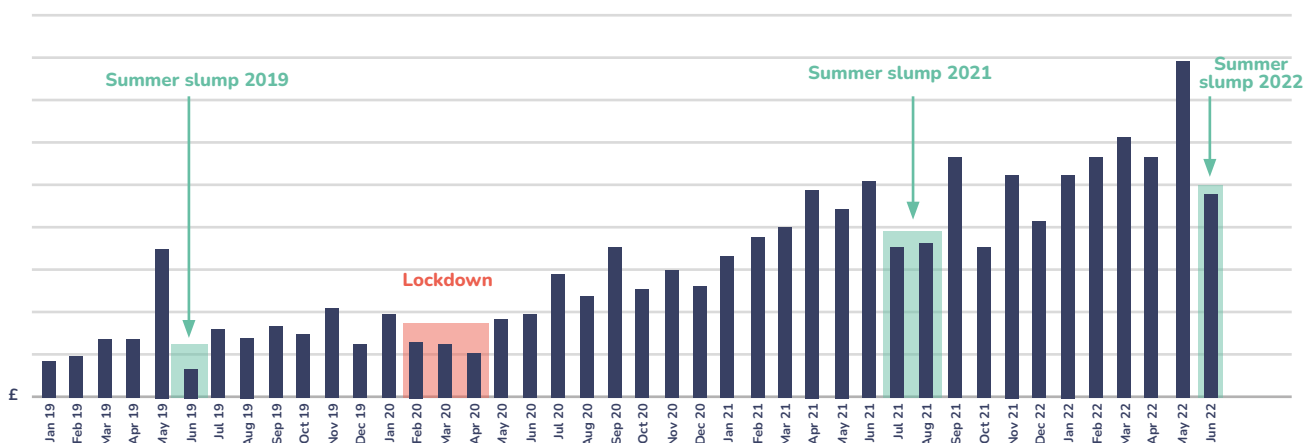
Sopro sales data

Our sales data shows we've suffered from our own summer slump over the years.

We're in an interesting position - being a marketing agency, we suffer from the belief there is a summer slump, even if that slump doesn't exist for most.

Some companies pull back from marketing as the summer months hit, in the belief that spending less is the way to balance the books (more on why this is a bad idea later!). As a consequence, we see a reduction in the amount of revenue generated from new business.

New business revenue



The evidence for the summer slump

There are two things to take from the previous graph.

1

Our phenomenal growth, driven largely by prospecting (at the time of writing, **70%** of our leads come from using our own service).

2

The second thing to note is the reduction in new business revenue in three of the last four summers.

The only exception was the bin fire that was 2020, when the summer coincided with a loosening of three months of covid restrictions and lockdowns. That year we understandably saw a slight uptake from the previous poor months.

Being presented with a graph like this can be a real sliding doors moment. You can look at that slight decline, and decide you need to turn off your prospecting or other marketing channels. Do not be tempted to go down this route. This tactic doubles down on the issue and compounds it later in the year.

The rest of this report will outline the best strategy when dealing with a summer downturn. We'll prove - using data and flawless logic - why the best response is to carry on prospecting.

We'll see that even if it's slightly slower getting deals over the line in summer, that's a completely separate issue to filling the top of the pipeline. It's vital for your business that you don't take the slowdown in converting leads to incorrectly guide you to stopping demand generation work.

What causes seasonal slumps?

Whether it's the summer months or the Christmas break, what's causing these seasonal slumps?

In a word, holidays.

From customers to prospects, and even a business's own staff, the feeling is that the relevant people aren't in the office at the right time.

There's even **some suggestion** that the summer makes people less productive, with increased temperature, more daydreaming, and a tendency to leave the office early all being blamed.



What are businesses doing about the summer slump?

Returning to our survey, we asked B2B businesses what actions they take to deal with the reduced business activity.



42%
of businesses do
nothing proactive

31%

switched activity from
marketing and sales
to admin or planning



10%

cut back on agency
staff, advertising
or spend



10%

scheduled work to
take place before or
after the slump



14%

of businesses
decided to move
their focus from
sales to filling their
lead gen funnels

10%

simply aimed to 'hit
harder'. Which sounds
like they really should
have just grouped
themselves with the
42% who admitted to
doing nothing.



Generating leads over the summer slump

As the previous answers make clear, there are many ways that companies tend to deal with a downturn.

But with a few exceptions, they can be grouped into two main approaches: change nothing, or do less.

This amounts to burying your head in the sand or hibernating your marketing, ready to begin again come the autumn. Do these approaches work? Can you stop your spending and activity for the summer months and then expect the same results when you reactivate it later?

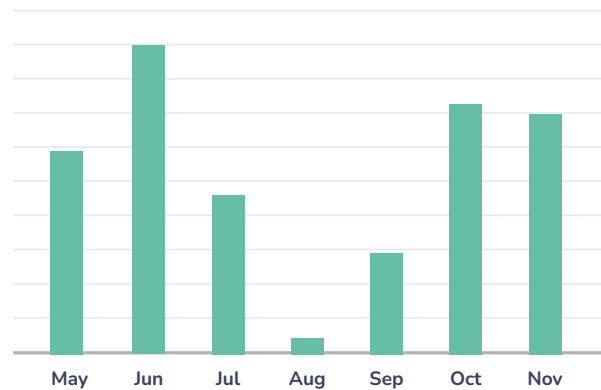
To answer this, we've examined the Sopro client dataset, and it reveals the problem with doing less.

Option one

Pause your prospecting over the summer.

We identified four clients who paused their prospecting campaigns over the summer of 2021. For the whole of July and August, these four businesses sent no new prospecting emails.

Leads - no summer outreach



Note: Despite no new activity, leads continued to come in during July, as prospects contacted in June replied to chaser emails.

Leads then dried up for the rest of July, and August. No surprise there

So no new opportunities were created over the summer. Imagine your sales reps playing Wordle, watering their desk plants, and practicing their Rubix cube skills.

And on top of this, a huge, hidden issue is revealed.

Leads numbers were affected in September too - when the campaign was back firing on all cylinders (and at full cost).

This is down to the time it takes for a campaign to reach full speed.

Remember those leads that were still coming in during July from the June activity? With all prospecting, there's a lag. This is down to the follow up emails sent

Chaser emails account for a huge number of the leads from prospecting.

A [recent analysis](#) of Sopro's own prospecting results saw a massive

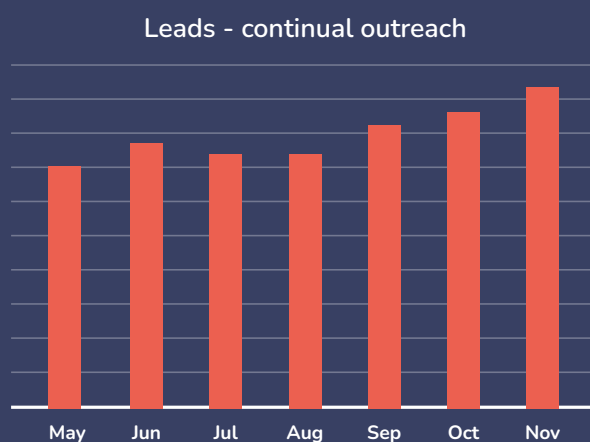
77%

of positive responses come from follow up emails.



Option two

Continual prospecting over the summer.



Our clients who held their nerve over the summer continued to see leads come in throughout July and August.

Not only that, but while the hibernators were still warming up in September, this group were seeing a steady increase of lead numbers toward the end of the year.

Closing deals over the summer slump (and beyond)

The previous comparison proves an obvious point: no prospecting, no leads. As Steve Harlow, Sopro Chief Sales Officer says:



If you stop prospecting you cut off your lead flow. But there's also a secondary impact that continues to impact sales - the time it takes to get the campaign up to full speed again.



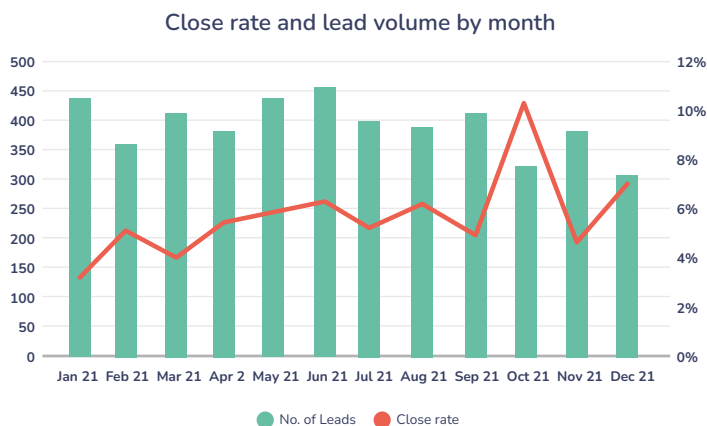
Steve Harlow,
Sopro Chief Sales Officer

What we need to answer now is whether those summer leads are worth chasing. If the summer slump is real, are decision-makers around to sign off on new spend?

Again, Sopro's own data can point to the answer. Remember, we're a business that does see a dip over the summer.

Close rates and leads

First, we can track the number of leads that prospecting brings in each month, and chart the close rates of those leads over time.



The graph above shows the close rate of leads for the month they were first added to our system, regardless of when the deal was signed. For example, **6%** of leads created in August become new Sopro clients, but they might not have signed up until a couple of months later.

This chart shows you that prospecting more or less generates the same volume of leads throughout the year. And more or less, they close at the same rate. In fact, the only outlier is October, when fewer leads were brought in. But fewer leads can allow your team to focus on the highest quality leads - and we saw a much higher close rate that month, making up for the reduced lead volume.

Summer leads become deals

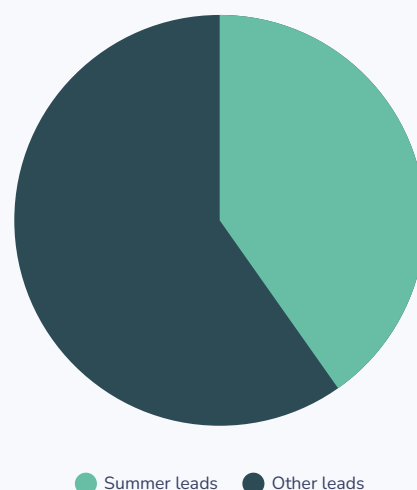
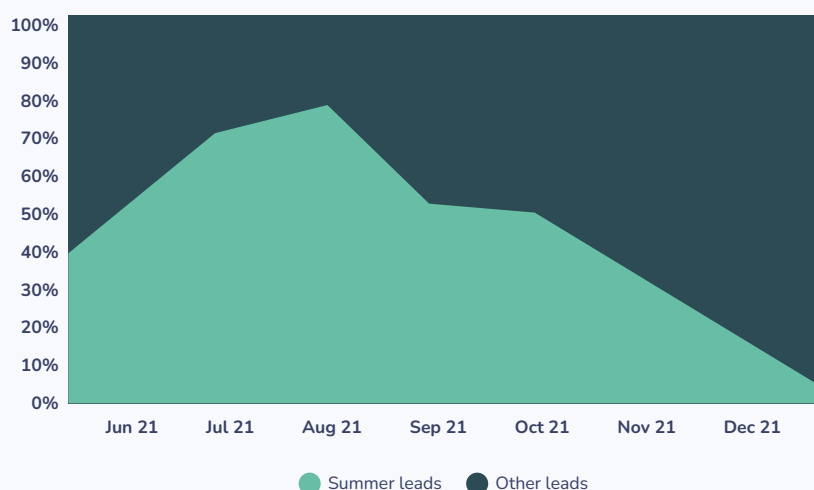
First, we can track the number of leads that prospecting brings in each month, and chart the close rates of those leads over time.

Next, we can track what happened to the leads that prospecting generated last summer.

Looking at all the new deals Sopro signed in the second half of last year, we can look at when that deal first became a lead in our system.

By splitting these leads into **Summer** (June - August) and **Other**, we can see how our summer prospecting impacted our sales in the second half of the year.

% of deals attributed to summer leads



In total, **42%** of our new clients from the second half of 2021 started talking to us thanks to some summer prospecting.

In August, **78%** of our new clients came from an initial chat over the summer. It highlights how well prospecting works, but this summer romance is not particularly surprising.

What may be more unexpected is the new deals that were still being signed in December, thanks to prospecting from June to August? That demonstrates the long-term impact pausing your prospecting can have. Pause in the summer sun, and you'll still be feeling the effects when the temperatures hit freezing.

And the impact actually lasts much longer than that.



In five of the first six months of 2022, we signed at least one new client that we can trace back to summer prospecting. So we were still signing new clients a full year after those emails went out. Summer prospecting - it's the gift that keeps on giving.



Ryan Welmans,
Sopro co-founder and CEO

How to survive (and thrive) during the summer slump

So we've learned that prospecting emails - like advertising and marketing in general - have long-term impacts. And it's clear that some brands will cut ad spend in challenging times like a summer slump or a recession.

So if your competitors are one of those businesses that cuts spending, attacking the summer will see you not only increase leads and deals but also means you can steal a march on your competition. With a great summer, your market share could even increase as a result.

Keep calm, and carry on prospecting

Struggling in the summer heat? Is your sales pipeline getting lethargic? Ensuring the top of your funnel is continually filled will give you the platform for success, both in short and long term.

- Pausing prospecting, or marketing in general, can have negative consequences for the rest of the year.
- Whether it's a summer slump, the Christmas period, a pandemic, or an incoming recession, time and again the evidence is clear: don't dial down your marketing budgets.
- History shows us it's the businesses that continue to drive new opportunities that come out of difficult times in the best state.
- Assuming you keep paying your sales team over the summer, you need to keep feeding them leads.

Top tips for getting more from your prospecting



If you hold your nerve and continue with your activity, any slump should be minimised. If you do still see a decrease in activity, you should focus on getting more from what you already have. Take a look below for our top tips on making the most of your existing pipeline.

Create a sequence of touch points

While summer holidays appear to be a valid reason for the slump, it doesn't stack up. Each Sopro prospect receives a sequence of emails over four weeks. There's the initial email, and three follow-ups if they don't reply.

Which means unless a prospect has decided to re-live their gap year and travel around Asia for three months to "find themselves", your outreach will connect with them once they return to their work.

Allow for Out of Office replies

We also alter our sequence based on Out of Office replies. If an automatic reply states that the person is off until a certain date, then we pause the outreach until they are back.

Lead scoring

During a period of fewer leads, your sales team must focus on leads that are most likely to convert and that bring in the most value to the business.

Lead scoring assigns a value to prospects according to how far they have moved from expressing initial interest to revealing purchase intent, and their potential customer value to the business.

Sales enablement content

If you really do have more time in the summer, auditing and improving your sales collateral and marketing content can help entice new leads and keep them flowing through the funnel.

Great content should help your buyers seamlessly pass through each stage of their buying journey, so you need to map your content to each stage of the funnel.

Speed up your sales cycle

If prospects are spending too long in your sales process, it gives competitors the chance to steal a march on you, and can let good leads go cold.

A good sales process acts as a roadmap for reps: a repeatable series of actions, optimised to achieve the best results.

Focus on upselling

Increasing the size of your deals - whether by upselling existing clients or focusing on deal size with new prospects - will help cover any dip in new deals numbers.

Referrals

A good referral programme can improve the number and quality of leads going into your sales funnel at a fraction of the cost of some other channels.

Whether you introduce a formal programme or encourage client services to discuss it with current clients, the benefits can be great: lower cost per acquisition, longer customer lifetime, and higher quality leads to name just three.

Test your outreach

If you do see a slowdown in lead flow, now might be the perfect time to test some of your methods.

Prospecting is a great channel for testing. Everything from prospect location, job titles, and industries to subject lines, email content, message sequencing, and the time of day you send can be tested, with results back really quickly.

To give you a headstart, check out Sopro's [The State of Prospecting report](#), which details the lessons we've learned from 25 million prospecting emails sent over the last six years.

Make sure you have a team over the summer

The only valid reason to reduce your prospecting or marketing is not having the resources to pick up the resulting sales conversations. You can't change that your prospects go on holiday, but you can make sure that there is adequate cover for your sales team.

Meet Sopro

It's true. We're our own best case study.

Sopro began with two founders and one unique idea.



Ryan Welmans



Rob Harlow

Sopro launched in Brighton in 2015 and our first customer was...well...Sopro!

We actually used our own technology to grow our business. It was during our initial campaigns that we perfected the service, delivering transparent and measurable ROI for all our clients.

By 2016 we had an office in Macedonia and, as our professional and passionate team of experts grew, we began receiving recognition and awards for revolutionising B2B lead generation.

Today, 70% of our new business still comes from our own email prospecting campaigns.³³

We create a daily flow of sales-qualified prospects into your business through email marketing.

Why Sopro



600 prospects per hour

Each hour, we engage over 600 new prospects, that's 1 new prospect every 6 seconds



£100m worth of new business

Each year, we power over £100m worth of new business deals globally across 500+ clients



8,000 campaigns delivered

Your first Sopro campaign will benefit from the experience of over 8,000 previous campaigns



500+ clients

Over 500 businesses currently trust Sopro prospecting to fuel their sales pipelines



£19 CPL

With a cost per lead as low as £19, we deliver cost-effective new sales conversations



3.6% average lead rate

Our historic lead rate across all industries is 3.6%, but some are as high as 6.9%

Inside a Sopro campaign

Every Sopro campaign begins with mapping your entire market. We then build a list of prospects from live data and craft the perfect introductory email.

We also send out three perfectly timed and well-spaced out follow up emails - and 72% of our leads come from these chasers. This entire process is all underpinned by some really smart technical gubbins.

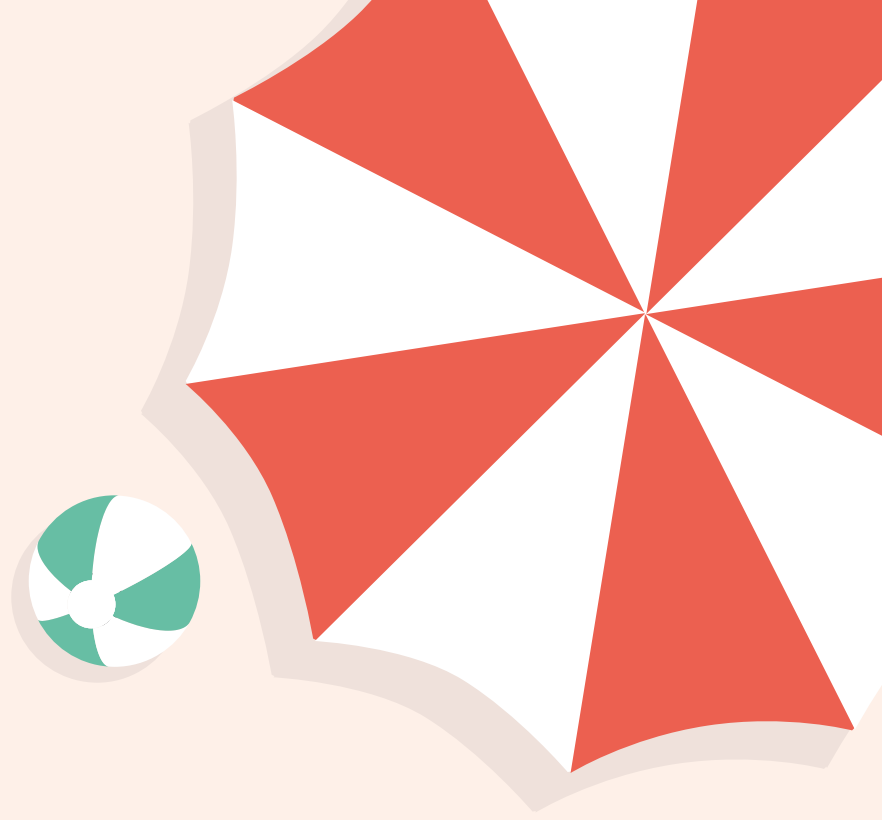
The result? A daily flow of qualified leads to drop easily into your sales process.

Full marketing assessment:	Segmented market breakdown (locations, industries, company sizes, job titles, keywords)
Prospect identification:	Sourcing and verifying live contact details
Top tech:	Clever tech and testing to guarantee high delivery rates and low spam scores
Great messaging:	Award-winning, personalised email introductions with informal data points
Daily outreach:	50-100 prospects contacted each day for a manageable, transformative lead flow
Follow ups:	Up to 3x follow up emails to increase your success rate by >80%
Reporting & CRM:	Full integration into your CRM with a live reporting dashboard
Continual optimisation:	Guaranteeing a strong ROI

Want to learn more?

Speak to one of our outreach experts today to see a live demo, tailored to your business.

Visit <https://sopro.io/> or call us on **02039883940**



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