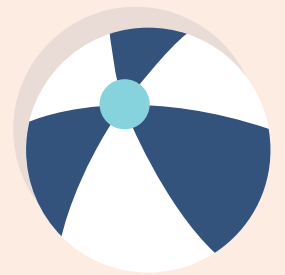




Riding the wave: how to navigate the summer slump.

Turning the summer slowdown
into a surfboard for success.



sopro.io



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Sailing into summer with Sopro



Introduction

For some, the longer days of summer bring joyous times.

A barbeque with friends, ice clinking in a cold glass of something sparkling. Summer wardrobes of sandals, skirts and shorts. Fresh fruit and fun at festivals. Dipping your toes in the waves of a cool, turquoise sea.

For others, summer brings irritation. Hayfever. Crowds. Mosquitos. Balancing work deadlines with childcare for six long weeks.

For certain salespeople, the dreaded summer slump can be added to that list. For them, the sun brings with it a noticeable dip in closed deals.

And while the majority of businesses don't experience a dip, for others it is a real phenomenon.

So for those who suffer in summer, this report will examine the seasonal slump and what can be done about it.

We'll look at historical examples, dive deep into data from Sopro client campaigns, our own sales data from the last four years, and examine a survey of B2B businesses to reveal how you can make sure that come autumn, your business is not only unscathed but thriving.

What you'll learn:

- Is the slump real? Survey and sales data
- What happens when you stop prospecting?
- What happens when you continue prospecting?
- The long-term effects of that choice
- Out of office and lead to sale times
- B2B businesses' current strategies
- Historical strategies of handling slower sales
- How to get more from your summer prospecting



Best channel for driving leads



Email was rated the most reliable channel for driving leads (59%)



More people rated email as a top channel than PPC, SEO and organic social media combined



Four times as many people cited email compared to cold calling

Is the slump real?

What exactly is the summer slump? The summer slump refers to a decrease in the number of new deals signed during the summer months.

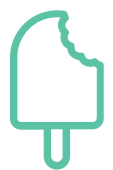
It does not mean there's a decline in new leads generated during this period.

Historically, we've seen an increase of up to 27% in summer leads compared to spring.

B2B businesses survey

We surveyed B2B businesses to find out the prevalence and impact of the summer slump.

The survey revealed:



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



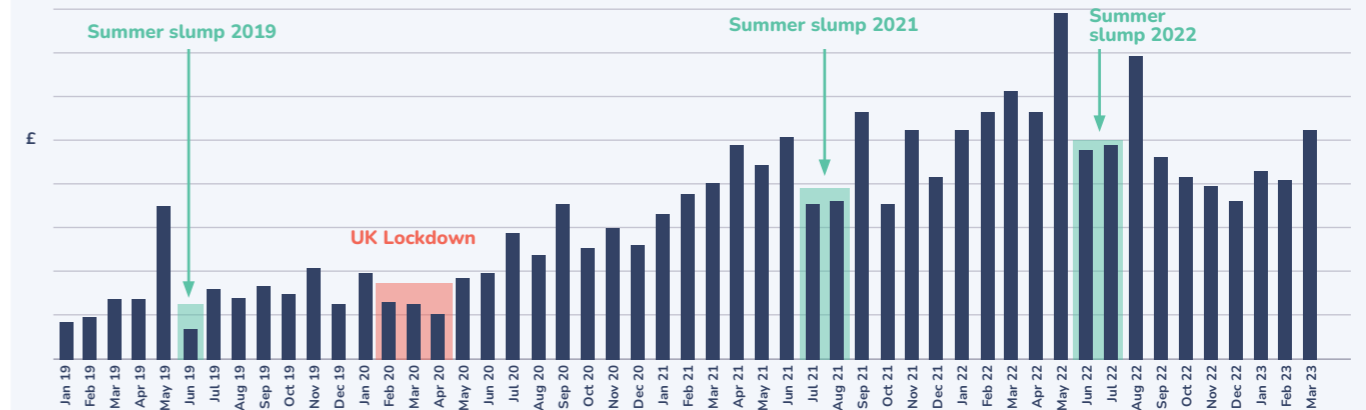
Our sales data shows we've suffered from our own summer slump over the years.

We're in a strange position: we suffer from a summer slump because people believe it exists, and therefore some of our clients respond by pulling back from their marketing

activity in the belief that spending less is the way to balance the books.

We'll cover why this is not the solution later, but the upshot is that we see a reduction in the amount of revenue generated from new business, as we can see below.

New business revenue



There are two things you might notice.

Graph fans will be pleased with the “up and to the right” results. Sopro’s growth has been driven largely by prospecting (at the time of writing, 65% of our leads come from using our own service).

The second thing is that we’ve signed a reduced amount of new business revenue in three of the last four summers.

The only exception was the year we’d rather all forget: 2020, which had its own rules.

This graph can be a real Sliding Doors moment for you.

You can look at these summer sales dips and decide you need to turn off your prospecting during the hotter months. Do not give in to this temptation! If you do, you’ll end up doubling down on the issue and compounding it later in the year.

So what should you do? Carry on prospecting, that’s what. And the rest of this report will prove - using data, graphs and flawless logic - why that’s the best response.

The root cause:

Deals taking longer to close is the root cause of the slowdown - a separate issue to filling the top of the funnel.

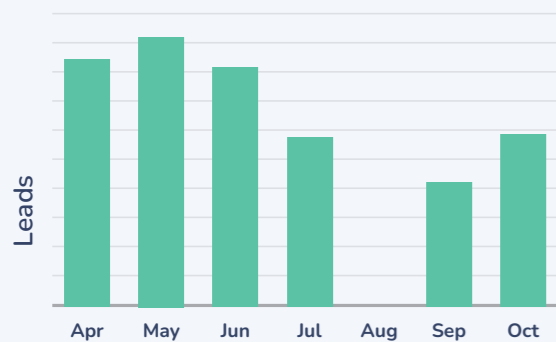
Continuing with prospecting sets you up for a successful second half of the year - whereas stopping can blow a hole in your sales.

Strategies for tackling the summer slump

Option one: pause your prospecting

As you can imagine, we'll always advise against this option. To illustrate what happens when you pause prospecting in the summer - even for a month - we've taken the results of three clients who did just that.

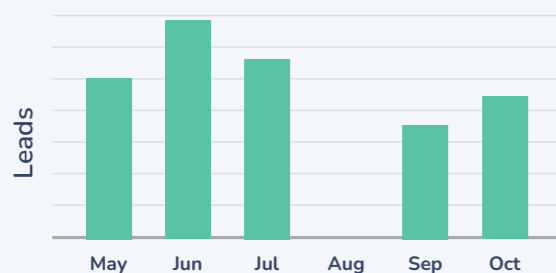
Client 1: Previously fab lead rate almost halved after pausing



This client's 4.3% spring lead rate was excellent, but they halted their campaign in July due to slow summer sales. Then as autumn approached, the sales pipeline was looking empty, so the campaign was restarted.

With the first emails flying out in September, the campaign took weeks to fully re-establish, resulting in a 41% lower lead rate for September and October compared to previous results.

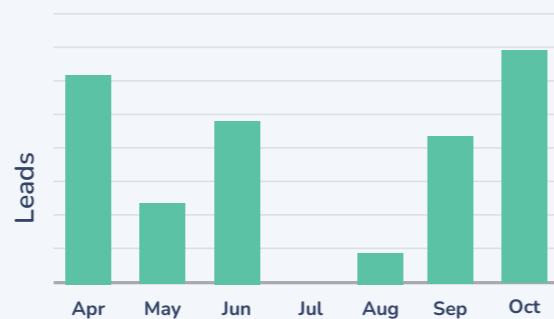
Client 2: Still feeling the pause's impact come Halloween



This client experienced a 3.4% lead rate in June but paused their campaign in August. Like the previous client, the impact was still being felt as Halloween got underway.

Upon restarting the campaign, it took several weeks for lead volumes to return to prior levels due to the multi-layered chaser email schedule.

Client 3: Struggled to recover their impressive lead rate upon restarting



Our last client achieved an impressive 12.3% lead rate in April. However, by July they too had hit pause. Although the campaign resumed in August, the lead volume was significantly lower until all the chaser emails were active again, with August and September lead rates being seriously impacted.

A recent analysis of 49.5 million Sopro emails saw a massive 76% of positive responses come from these follow-up emails. So halting the flow, together with the time it takes a campaign to reach full speed again, has a huge impact!



SOPRO EXPERT

"If you stop prospecting you obviously cut off your immediate lead flow. But the true impact on sales continues for much longer, and that can be even more damaging."

**Steve Harlow,
Chief Sales Officer Sopro**

Picture the scene at these companies. The sales teams would have remained busy during the summer months, despite struggling to close deals. But when autumn comes knocking, the pipeline looks decidedly empty because there were no leads created in the summer.

The Head of Sales starts having visions of their team perfecting latte art and pointlessly arguing with ChatGPT, so turns the campaign back on. But the campaigns take time to build to full speed, and the pipeline remains low on leads.

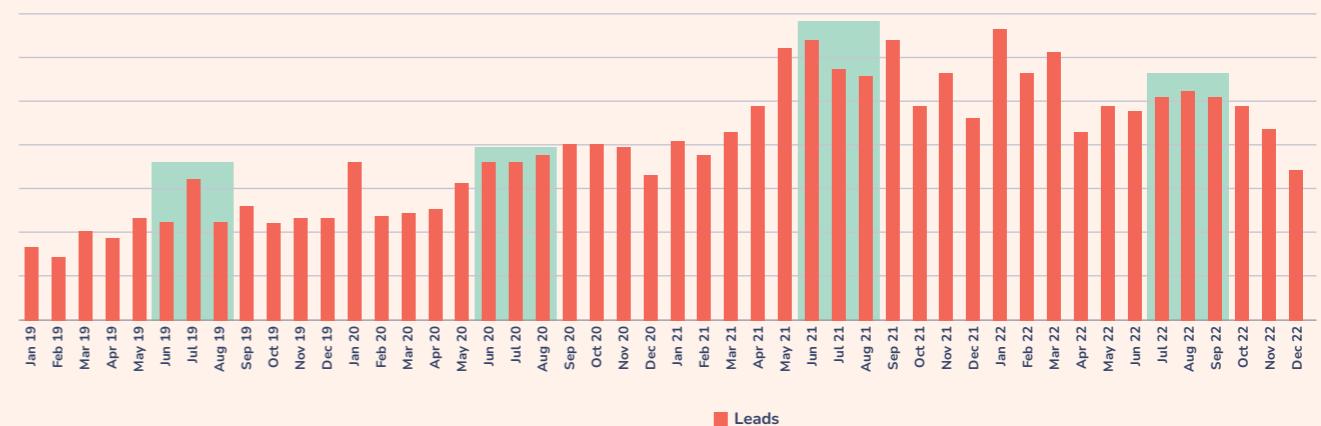
And that's just looking at leads. Even if their sales cycle is only one month, a brief summer pause would mean they aren't closing new deals until November or December.

Option two: keep calm and carry on

The largest dataset we can look at is Sopro's own prospecting campaigns. Come rain or shine, they've never stopped since Sopro was founded.

The number of leads has stayed consistently high. Each summer, Sopro sees an increase in leads of between 7 and 27%, compared to the previous three months.

Leads from continual outreach





CLIENT QUOTE

“I was so impressed with the results that after the first three months, we decided to double our spend. It was that good. And since then, it’s grown even more so.”

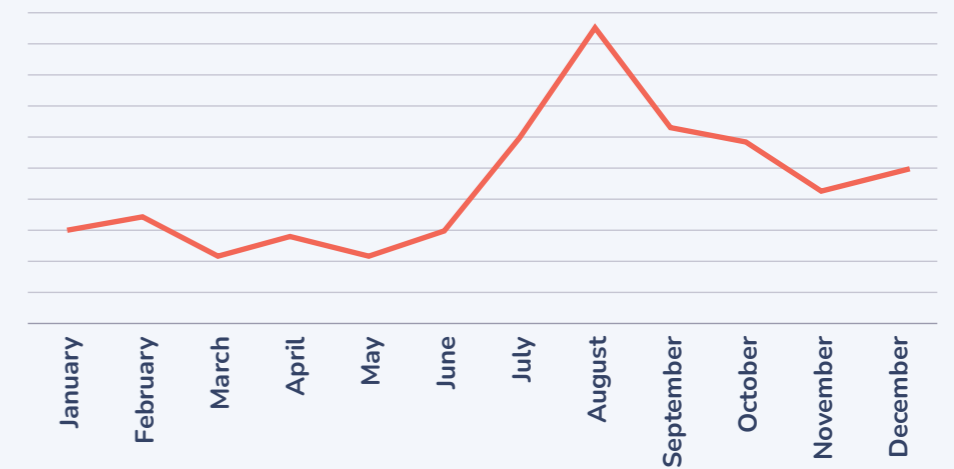
Tom Newham,
Managing Director, On IT



On the beach: how to handle out-of-office replies

Predictably, the summer months see an increase in decision-makers who are unavailable, resulting in a sharp increase of out-of-office replies each month.

Out of office replies



But Sopro amends your prospecting sequence if you get an out-of-office reply (which nearly always states their return date).

Our clever tech pauses the email sequence until they return, and then sends a different message, referencing the original out-of-office reply.

Remember that these leads can still convert: they just take longer to close as you wait for the buyer to return to their desk.

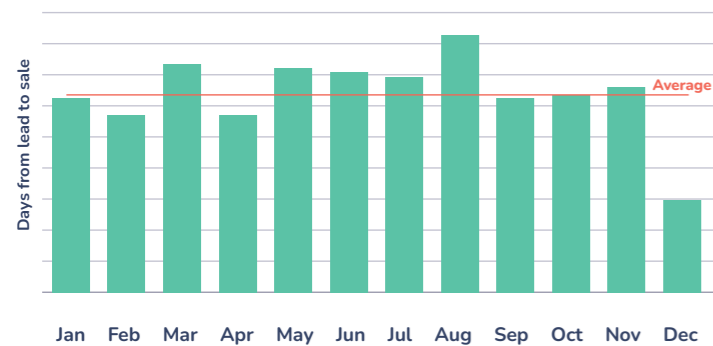
BBQ or B2B? Examining lead-to- close time

OK, so if we carry on prospecting and continue to generate leads from prospecting, but we see a dip in sales during this time, what's going on?

It comes down to a change in lead-to-close time.

We looked at the time it took for a lead to turn into a deal in 2022, and how that changed depending on the month the lead was generated.

Lead to deal conversion time



Sure enough, May, June and July are all above average. While leads created in August take by far the longest to close.

So a little patience is needed for these more leisurely summer leads.

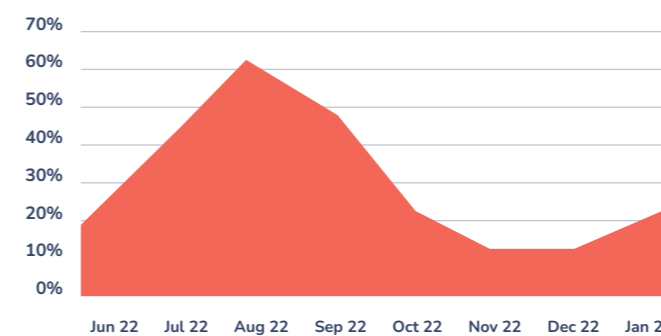


Summer leads: the gift that keeps on giving

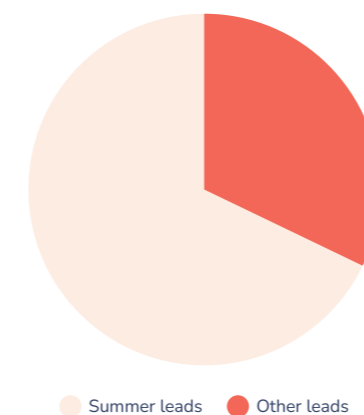
This is all starting to point to the long-term nature of summer prospecting, so let's track Sopro's summer prospecting leads through our own pipeline.

Looking at all the new deals Sopro closed in the second half of last year, we can see when that deal first became a lead in our system - that is, when the prospect first replied positively to one of our emails.

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



● Deals signed from summer leads



In total, 32% of our new clients from the second half of 2022 can be traced back to our summer prospecting.

In August, 63% of our new clients signed 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 that 23% of deals signed in January 2023 were thanks to prospecting in Summer 2022. That demonstrates the long-term impact pausing your prospecting can have.

Pause in the summer sun, and you'll still be feeling the burn as the temperatures hit freezing. But continue, and you will reap the rewards for some time to come.

As Ryan Welmans, Sopro co-founder and CEO points out:



“In five of the first six months of 2022, we signed at least one new client that we can trace back to the prospecting we did in summer 2021. 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.”

What strategies do other businesses take?

Our survey of B2B businesses asked what actions they take to deal with the reduced business activity during the summer months:

- 31% switch activity away from sales and marketing
- 10% cut back on advertising or agency spend
- 10% reduce summer activity
- 22% do nothing proactive
- 9% simply aim to “hit harder”
- 14% of businesses focus on lead generation

As these survey results make clear, there are many ways that companies can deal with a downturn. But they can be grouped into three main approaches: do less, do nothing, or do more.



Do less

51% actively move resources away from sales and marketing spend over the summer, whether delaying output or focusing on other areas.



Do nothing

While you have to admire the optimism of the 9% who aim to “hit harder”, vague inspirational nonsense does not make a business plan. We’re going to file those people with the 22% who do nothing.



Do more

And that leaves just 14% who focus on lead generation and try to generate more business interest to get out of their summer funk.



If only **14%** are actively attacking the summer, it leaves a massive opportunity to not only grow your business, but get ahead of the competition.

How to handle a downturn: lessons from history

So are the businesses we surveyed doing the right thing? The history books repeatedly echo the Sopro data: spending on marketing and advertising when times are tough pays off in the long term.

HubSpot increased marketing spend during the 2008 recession, even creating a free marketing tool. The company saw revenues increase from **\$2.9 million** in 2007 to **\$77.6 million** in 2013, a

2,570%

increase over the span of the recession.



Following the 2008 global wwww 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.



Turn the summer slump into your summer **SIZZLE**

If you're seeing a decrease in summer sales, you need to find a way to get more from what you already have: converting more of the leads you have now, or lining them up for a sale when they return to the office.

Easy for us to say, but how can you actually do this? Here are some tips:



Score your leads

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



Level up your sales content

If you really do have more time in the summer, auditing your sales collateral can help keep leads flowing through the funnel. Make sure you have all the content to handle common objections.



Test your outreach

If you do see a slowdown in lead flow, now might be the perfect time to test your approach. Prospecting is a great channel for testing: so many factors to test, easy attribution, and quick results.

To get the ideas flowing, check out The State of Prospecting 2023, which details the lessons we've learned from sending 49.5 million prospecting emails on behalf of our clients.



Speed up your sales process

If prospects are spending too long in your sales pipeline, good leads can go cold. Map and optimise your sales pipeline to increase the number of leads making it through.



Encourage 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. The benefits can be significant: lower cost per acquisition, longer customer lifetime, and higher quality leads, to name just three.



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.



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's adequate cover for your sales team.



Sailing into summer with Sopro

Looking to join us?
Visit sopro.io/demo to book a call with an Outreach expert.

Sopro began with two founders and one unique idea.



Ryan Melnans



Rob Harlow

Already a Sopro client? Speak to your Customer Success Manager to discuss your summer prospecting.

We launched in Brighton, UK in 2015, and our first customer was ourselves. We developed, tested and refined our processes and tech in those early days. We used nothing but prospecting to grow our business for over four years. And despite 100% growth year on year, offices in Miami, Dubai, Skopje, and London, and a cabinet full of awards, we haven't stopped improving since those early days.

Sopro helps you sell more by starting new sales conversations with your perfect clients.

We source your ideal prospects, engage them with personalised emails (that come from your team), and connect them directly to you when they are ready to talk business.

Even now, 65% of our new business still comes from our own email prospecting campaigns. So trust us, it works.

Why Sopro



Set up in two weeks

Get a new source of leads in as little as two weeks, synced to your CRM.



600+ clients

Over 600 businesses currently trust Sopro to deliver a reliable sales pipeline.



Complete control and visibility

Sopro Portal gives you full visibility of prospects, templates, and real-time performance.



£19 CPL

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



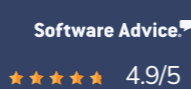
15,000+ campaigns delivered

Your Sopro campaign benefits from our experience of over 15,000 previous campaigns.

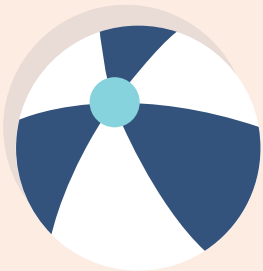
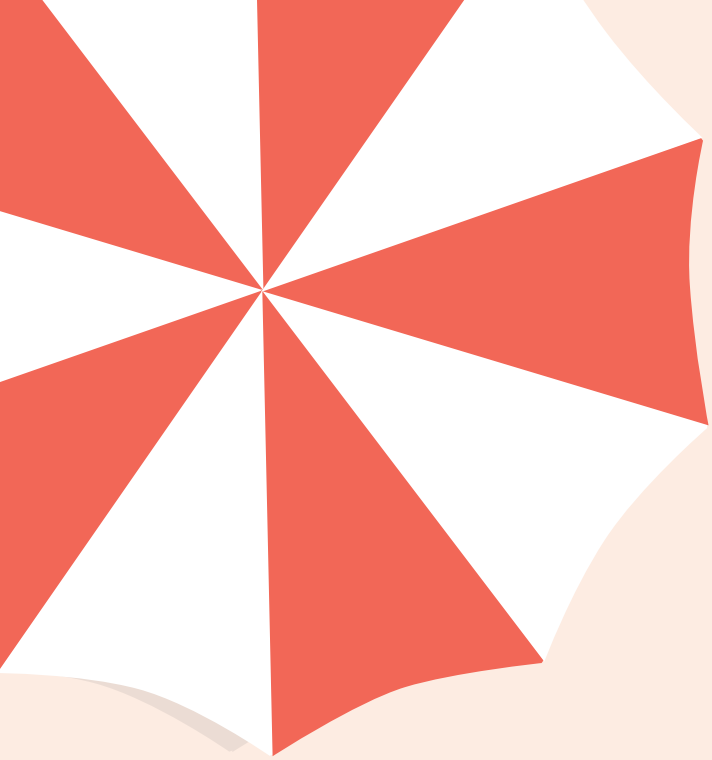


3.2% average lead rate

Our historic lead rate across all industries is 3.2%, but some are as high as 7.8%.



sopro



Sell more.