Mapping your audience:

How to build your prospecting database

sopro.io

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Introduction

In the world of prospecting, the perfect database acts like a map of your audience. It charts the landscape of prospects so your brave sales team can head out and talk business. It acts as the foundation for prospecting activity. With countless tasks on the long road to sales, the last thing you need is to start with an outdated database.

Yet, there are many different paths that beckon when building your own database. Much like choosing which fork in the road to take, the method you pick could greatly sway the length of your journey, the level of challenges you face, and the splendor of your final destination!

So, as prospecting experts, we're here to teach you the different approaches to building your own prospecting database and share our tips for making it as quick and easy as possible.

Sopro is built on up-to-date, quality data from multiple sources.

There are three key pillars to building a prospecting database:

01
Target the right people
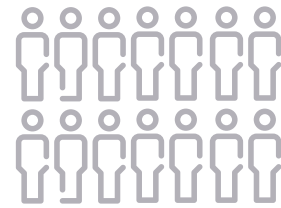
02
Use their current contact information

03
Comply with data protection laws

We're obsessed with data.

49.5m

That's why we recently analysed **49.5 million emails**

from **2,139 Sopro clients**

and surveyed **359 B2B professionals**

to find out more about prospecting in 2023. We dug deep to get the info you need to create a prospecting campaign that works.

Sopro emails see a

95.2%

deliverability rate.

Download the
State of Prospecting whitepaper here

Of course, there's a lot more to it than that. There are quite a few things you'll need to consider...

How do you want to contact people: email? phone? social media?

Where can you find the contact information for those prospects?

How will you diversify your data sources to ensure a comprehensive and well-rounded prospecting database?

What data points do you need to target the right people?

How do you make sure you comply with the relevant data laws?

How and where you can find relevant data?

How do you ensure that the data you collect is accurate, up-to-date, and reliable?

Can you scale your database building? If you have a manual process and a large audience, will it be financially worth it?

How will you keep your prospecting database up-to-date?

And scalability – can you afford to spend three hours researching each and every prospect? Do you have resources?

Compliance

Anyone dealing with data has to take their compliance obligations very seriously. If your target clients are in Europe, that means the GDPR laws apply (General Data Protection Regulation). GDPR is a set of rules that protect people's privacy and personal data in Europe.

And if you're a business dealing with that kind of info, you need to follow the rules or risk serious financial and reputational repercussions.

How to make sure your prospecting is GDPR compliant

1

Only process the data you need: there must be legitimate interest.

2

Have an easy-to-read privacy policy that anyone can understand.

3

Regularly audit your systems to ensure they're working in the way they should.

4

Keep a record of who has given you data consent (and who has explicitly asked you not to contact them)

5

When someone does ask you to stop contacting them, stop. Immediately.

6

Seek legal advice if you're not sure!

GDPR

In B2B communications, you are not required to **explicitly seek permission** before reaching out to someone. This is because GDPR regulations state you are permitted to send direct marketing communications if there is a **"legitimate interest"** involved.

Which channel should you use?

To build a database, you first need to decide on the channels you'll be using to contact your prospects. This choice will impact the data you need to collect and the sources you use to find it.

So what are your options?

Cold calling   Social media outreach   Direct mail   SMS or text messaging   Email outreach

Choosing the right channel for your prospecting depends on a lot of things, such as your target audience, what kind of product or service you offer, and the budget and resources available to you. And as you embark on your journey for successful prospecting, these are the six channels that you'll need to focus on.
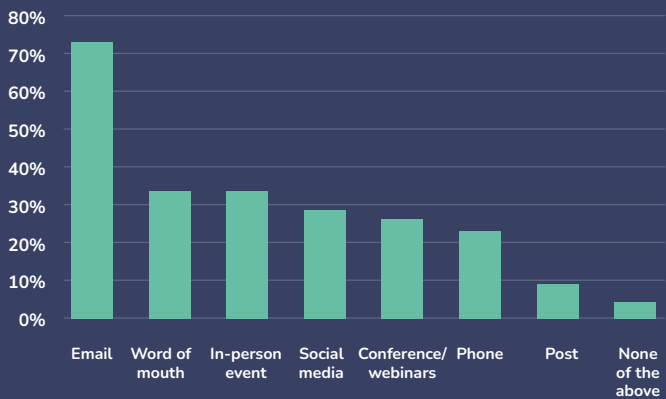
Cold calling

Cold calling could be seen as the OG of prospecting, but that doesn't mean it's the best – and it's certainly lost popularity in recent years.

Only 2% of cold calls end up in a sales conversation.

Why is cold calling becoming less effective? One answer could be fewer people answer their phones if they don't know who it is. 92% of consumers think unidentified calls might be fraud, and 79% of unidentified calls go unanswered.

What are your preferred ways of hearing from suppliers in the buying process?

Chart x-axis categories: Email, Word of mouth, In-person event, Social media, Conference/webinars, Phone, Post, None of the above

In our survey, telephone (aka cold calling) ranked all the way down as one of the least favourite ways to be contacted. In fact, four times as many people prefer email to cold calling.

People just don't like to be called on the phone by people they don't know – plus it's a major interruption to your day, unlike email where you can check it when it's convenient to you.

Social media outreach

75% of B2B buyers use social media to make buying decisions, according to research from LinkedIn.

Whether we're at home or at work, we're on our social media accounts a lot: around two and a half hours per day. So it makes sense to find prospects where you know they already are.

How does it work? You can use the different social channels to reach new customers, but each one has its own strengths and merits, and should be used differently.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is the most important social channel for B2B prospecting. You can use it to research prospective clients and reach out to them through direct messaging. To get the most out of LI, you will want to use LinkedIn Sales Navigator: 72% of sales professionals say this tool gets them more leads. We'll cover that in more detail in "The social selling approach" section.

Facebook
Although not great for direct messaging, 66% of sales reps use Facebook to research prospects and/or their business. It's also a great platform for paid ads that let you target people in your audience.

Instagram
IG can be a great tool for researching your prospective clients and market. In fact, according to HubSpot, 51% of salespeople use it to find new prospects. You can also sign up your business and make an Instagram business page that lets you dig deeper into your audience.

Twitter
Twitter can be a bit hit and miss, depending on who you're hoping to reach, but it's still a valuable tool for finding people and communities, and researching your clients and the wider market.

8   Mapping your Audience 2023 - Which channel should you use?

Which channel should you use? - **Mapping your Audience 2023**   9

Direct mail

Direct mail prospecting just means sending promotional materials to potential customers through physical mail… that might sound a little old school, but it can still work.

Direct mail is a physical, tangible item that can be held, seen, and felt, making it memorable and engaging. Digital marketing does bring many additional benefits, but there's no doubt the level of competition is fierce.

In 2022, 33% of marketers sent emails on a weekly basis, while an additional 26% sent emails multiple times a month.

Compare that with direct mail, where in the UK the average household gets just 326 pieces of direct mail advertising a year.

And with the help of targeted mailing lists and personalised messaging, modern direct mail can be tailored to the specific interests and needs of each potential customer, increasing the chances of a positive response.

SMS or text messaging

Looking for a noninvasive way to reach people on their mobile? Text message prospecting might be the answer.

Text messages have an extremely high open rate, with some studies suggesting that most text messages are opened within minutes of being received. And with the ability to personalise messages and segment your audience based on their interests and behaviors, SMS prospecting can be tailored to each individual customer, leading to higher engagement and conversion rates.

Email outreach

But what's the best channel for driving leads? Email!

You were probably expecting that answer from a company that offers email prospecting. But we have extensive research to back it up!

The numbers speak for themselves

72% of B2B marketing decision-makers say that email prospecting delivers **"good to excellent"** ROI

What are the advantages of email prospecting?

48% said it helps them contact decision-makers directly.

34% said it frees up time for their sales team to focus on selling.

Email prospecting makes it possible to reach thousands of prospects at once, and with personalisation, those emails can still feel 121. It's like having the cheat code for prospecting.

Types of data

Demographic data

Personal data, such as:
Age, Gender, Occupation, Cultural background and Family status

Filmographic data

Business data, such as:
Company name, Location, Size and Industry

Technographic

What technology a customer or client is using including software and hardware

Chronographic data

Events or company changes that happen in your target audience environment that could impact their clients choice to buy from you such as a major hiring or a rebrand

Intent data

Behavioural information that relates to your prospective client or customers buying intent such as visiting your website or signing up to a mailing list

There isn't just one type of data. There is a mountain of information available on modern buyers, and each little piece of information might seem important, but you need to work out what's actually relevant to your campaign.

With any type of outbound marketing, it's important to use these different types so you can build a database that only contains the people who are a good first for your business.

While firmographic data is the obvious starting point for building a B2B database, the other data types can provide a more comprehensive view of potential customers.

Technographic

Technographic data helps businesses identify the software, platforms, and tools used by their audience, allowing for a more targeted and effective approach to reaching them. This data can be vital or irrelevant, depending on what your business sells.

Demographic

Demographic can be important to make sure you get your targeting bang on. Not all products are going to relate to every age and gender.

Chronographic

Chronographic data could be particularly important if you're a startup or young business as it can tell you when there could be funding coming up, or vital networking events.

Different methods of building your database

Your database is the foundation of successful prospecting – and how you go about building that database will make all the difference.

There are several different paths to build a database, and let's be honest, some of them are a lot easier to navigate than others. Which one is right for your business will depend on a lot of factors, but we'll spell out every method so you can choose your own journey.

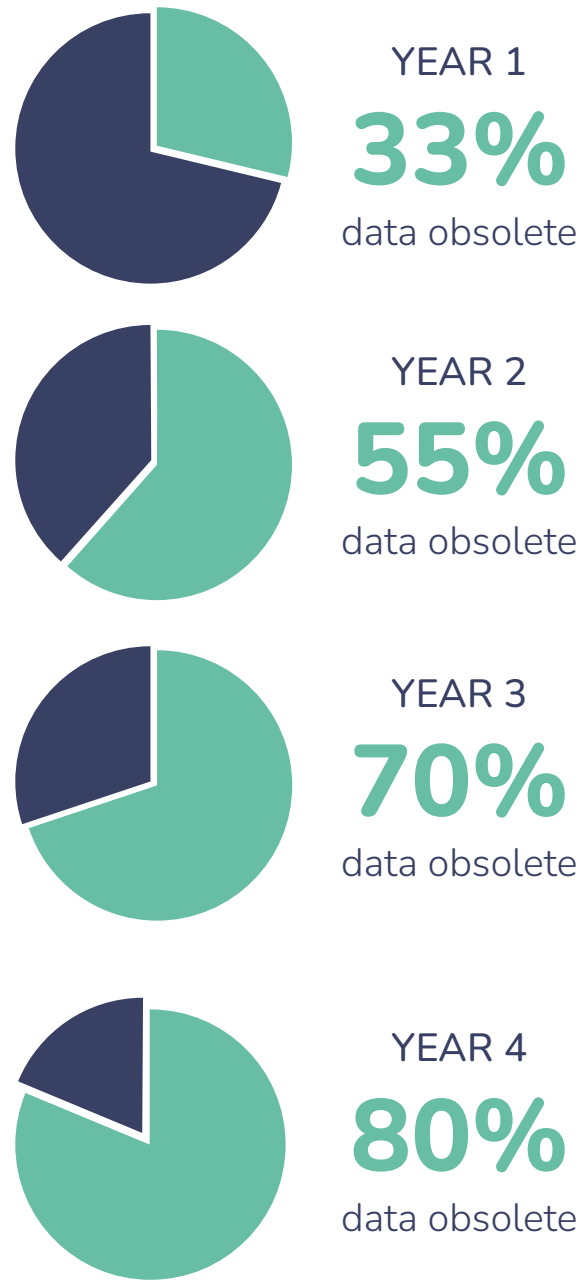Let's get into it 👇

The buying data approach

23% of our surveyees said they get their prospecting data from bought lists. Buying data lists can be a great way to get data without using up any time, but there are some legal and practical issues with it.

Buying data can seem like a great shortcut, but is there a secret price to pay?

What's the problem with bought lists?

Data decay. In short, the data won't stand the test of time. Bought lists go out of date. The average worker changes jobs 12 times in their lifetime and changes roles every three years. How are you supposed to keep up when that person moved on six months ago?

YEAR 1
33%
data obsolete

YEAR 2
55%
data obsolete

YEAR 3
70%
data obsolete

YEAR 4
80%
data obsolete

Buying lists can work. But only if you have the time to audit your data regularly to ensure it's up-to-date and GDPR compliant.

As with the other methods, you need to know exactly who you want to speak to first. The more specific your Ideal Customer Profile, the easier it will be to purchase data that are actually relevant to you.

You also need to consider the ethics. Where did the data broker access the data, and does it adhere to GDPR regulations? Are they giving you only the details of people likely to have an interest in your product or service?

If you're mass sending to anyone and everyone, you can expect a high rate of spam complaints, low response rates, and damage to your reputation as a sender, as well as huge fines from the compliance authorities.
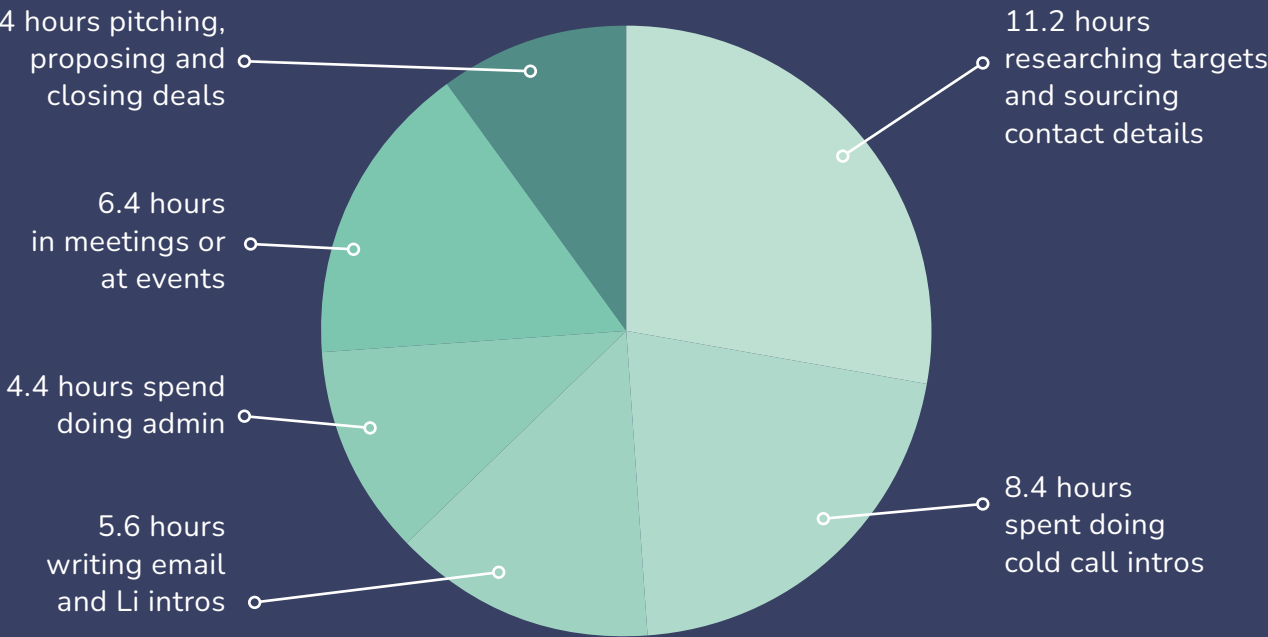
The manual approach: email and phone

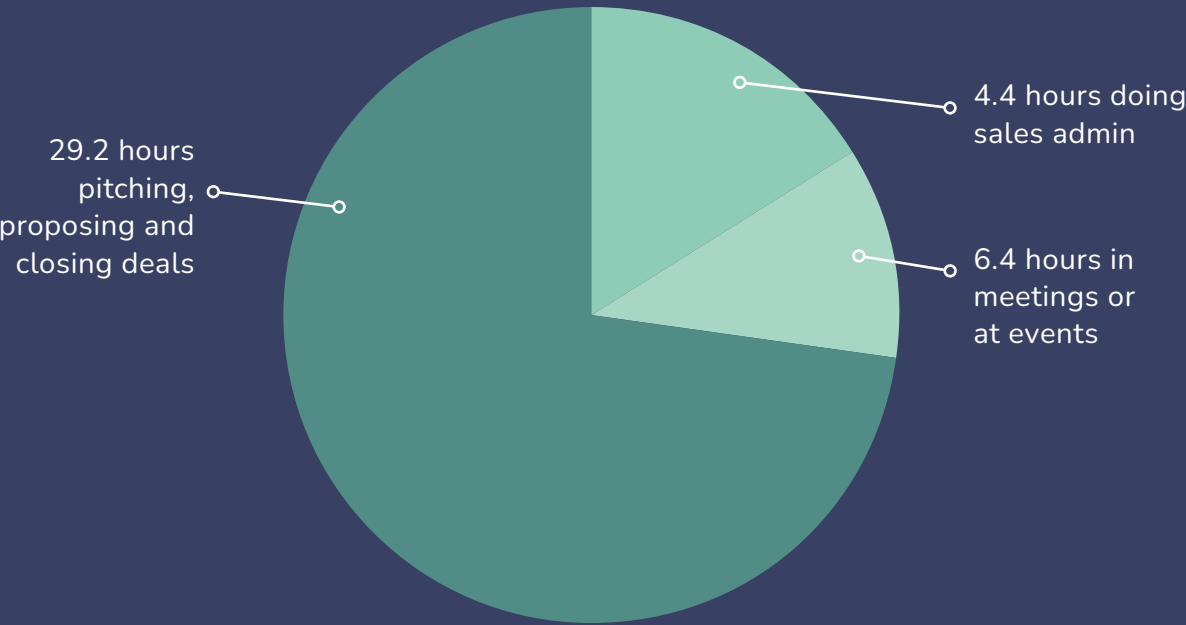53% of salespeople we surveyed are using manual prospecting and outreach. But is it the right path for you?

Creating your own database is possible, particularly on a small scale. But be warned: it's very time-consuming.

We examined multiple studies to discover how B2B sales reps spend their working week when doing prospecting manually and compared it to how they spend their time when using a specialist agency like ours

A typical week in sales: manual outreach

4 hours pitching, proposing and closing deals

11.2 hours researching targets and sourcing contact details

6.4 hours in meetings or at events

4.4 hours spend doing admin

8.4 hours spent doing cold call intros

5.6 hours writing email and Li intros

A typical week in sales: specialist agency

29.2 hours pitching, proposing and closing deals

4.4 hours doing sales admin

6.4 hours in meetings or at events

These charts speak for themselves, but even though it's arduous, it's not impossible to build your own database if you can navigate through it...

The eight steps to manually building your own database...

Step 1 – Define your target audience

- Determine the specific industries, locations, company size, job titles, and any other required specifics.
- You can analyse your existing customers if you don't already have a clear idea of who to target.

Step 2 – Find suitable companies

- Conduct research on social media, news sites, job sites, and industry directories, and get friendly with search engines. You need to do a lot of research, it's not for the faint of heart!
- Make sure all the companies match your target audience criteria

Step 3 – Turn companies into individuals

- Now you need to find the relevant decision-makers at those companies. Depending on your profile, it could be CEOs and Directors, the head of tech, or everyone in HR.
- For this step, you'll use two main sources of info: social media (LinkedIn particularly) and company websites. Contact us and about us pages will often have at least the senior leadership team listed.
- In the UK, Companies House lists all registered companies, their owners, and directors, so can be useful if that fits your profile.

Step 4 – Find their contact details

- Search online directories, social media, company websites and email signatures.
- There are tools you can use to help automate the process, such as email finders, phone number finders or even webscrapers, which we'll cover just below this section.

Step 5 – Verify the contact information

- Verify the accuracy of the collected data to ensure that it is up-to-date and complete. This will save time and protect you later.
- Use email verification tools, social media profiles, and phone number lookup services.
- If you send too many emails to incorrect addresses, your domain reputation could suffer. Take all the invalid attempts and try alternative name/domain combinations.

Step 6 – Organise your data

- Create a spreadsheet or database to store and organise the verified data.
- You should add it to your CRM at this point so you can monitor activity with each contact.

Step 7 – Segment and prioritise

- Segment and prioritize your prospects based on different audience segments and their potential to become a customer, level of engagement, and likelihood of conversion.

Step 8 – Maintain and update the data

- Regularly update and maintain your dataset to ensure that it stays accurate, relevant, and up-to-date.
- This includes removing outdated or irrelevant data and adding new prospects as necessary.

This manual method is as time-consuming as it sounds, but a scraping tool such as Octoparse or Zoominfo can collect the data for you.

Depending on the size of the website and the complexity of the data, this could take anywhere from a few minutes to several hours.

The key to using a data scraper successfully is:

1. Finding the right relevant companies
2. Checking the emails are the right decision-maker you want to speak to
3. Make sure that the email address is up to date – you can do this using a deliverability checker!

> Manually building your own database can be effective for smaller companies.
>
> But it won't be as manageable for larger companies because you'll struggle to pull in enough leads.
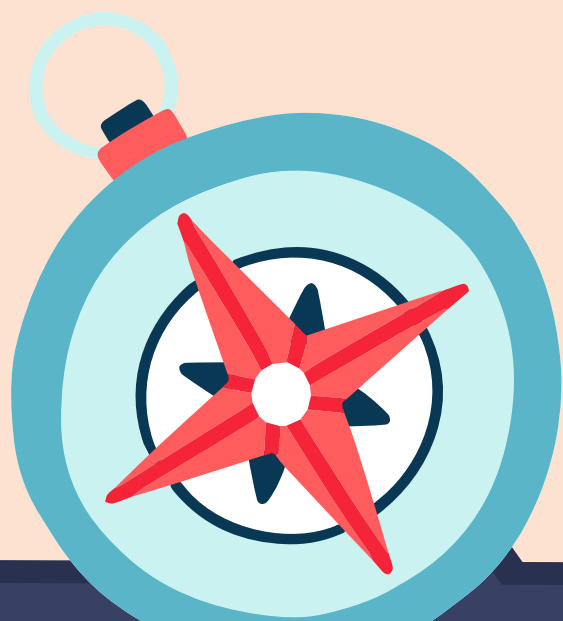
The manual approach: social selling

Social selling is the use of social media platforms and networks to build and strengthen relationships with potential customers, with the ultimate goal of driving sales.

The primary social media platform for B2B is LinkedIn. Sure, you can reach people on Snapchat or Instagram, but most people don't want to mix business with pleasure and keep their social accounts private.

Facebook is also a popular choice amongst marketers for reaching people. The advantages are its large user base, tools for building relationships, and powerful targeting capabilities. These allow businesses to connect with and engage potential customers through personalised content. And while it might not always be the place for a direct message, it works wonders with paid ads.

LinkedIn is the star, though, as it was designed for professionals to connect with other professionals.

But it's more than just sending out messages to people who look like they could be interested in your product or service. You can utitilise LinkedIn Sales Navigator to help you connect with prospects on a deeper level.

How to list build using LI Sales Navigator

1. Before you start, you need to define your ideal customer profile or buyer persona, including job titles, industries, and company size.

2. Then, you can use the search filters in Sales Navigator to find leads that match your criteria.

3. Save leads to lists and use tagging and note-taking features to keep track of your outreach efforts.

4. Use the "Lead Recommendations" feature to discover new leads that match your buyer persona.

5. Integrate Sales Navigator with third-party tools like CRM systems to streamline lead generation and management.

6. Regularly review and update your database to ensure it remains accurate and relevant.

7. Use insights and analytics provided by Sales Navigator to measure your results and make data-driven decisions.

Hot off the press... FinalScout AI

We can't turn a blind eye to AI. The long list of things AI can do for you is growing at a furious pace, and yes, it can be used to help you build your prospecting database as well. FinalScout AI is a chatGPT-powered email finding extension. It automatically extracts email addresses from LinkedIn, meaning your only job is connecting with prospects. They'll do all the data collection for you.

The "bring in the experts" approach

So buying data is a risky approach. Building your own database, or using social media, works on a small scale but quickly becomes too much work to be practical.

But there is a shortcut to mapping your market and building your database. Expert prospecting companies like Sopro, have the experience and technology to source accurate data for your business, no matter what you do.

How we build a database

We don't just rely on one data source. Instead, we've built a world-class tech system that collates and verifies data from multiple sources.

When a new client comes on board, we use this tech to build a brand new, bespoke list just for them.

Our data is built from masses of website crawl data and multiple email verification systems. We've built our own big data solutions and layers of algorithms.

Combined, this tech sources up-to-date email addresses for every single contact. 160 data points ensure we zero in on their target persona, creating a tailored and targeted dataset.

At Sopro, we:

1. Find only your target audience
2. Source and verify their up-to-date contact details
3. Are obsessed with data protection laws

Map your market

Our market mapper tool gives you an extensive overview of your total addressable audience with just a few simple questions. A thorough and specific market map is essential for a solid prospecting database.

We believe so strongly in our prospecting know-how that we use our own technique to build our own prospecting database.

Use our Market mapper tool here

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.

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

In 2015, we set up shop in Brighton and kicked off our journey by serving ourselves as our first customer. During this phase, we dedicated ourselves to perfecting our techniques and technology by constantly testing and refining them. We relied solely on prospecting for more than four years to drive business growth. Despite achieving tremendous success, such as annual growth of 100%, establishing offices in key locations like Miami, Dubai, Skopje, and London, and earning several prestigious awards, we have never stopped striving for excellence since those early days.

Sopro specializes in enabling you to achieve more sales by starting fresh sales conversations with those who matter. We locate the best prospects for you, engage them through highly personalized emails, and link them directly to you when they're ready to discuss business. Even today, a significant 65% of our new business comes from our own email prospecting initiatives.

Sopro provides an up-to-date, relevant, and segmented database to help you sell more.

G2	Capterra	Trustpilot	GetApp	Software Advice
4.8/5	4.9/5	4.6/5	4.9/5	4.9/5

Book a demo with us here