

The Follow-Up Ladder

Not “how often should I follow up?” The question is: what rung is this deal on?

HOT

Every 48 to 72 hours

A decision is coming. They asked for a proposal, they are talking to their partner, they are back with the board this week. Something real is moving on their side. Silence from you is dangerous here.

WARM

One touch per week

Real interest, slower clock. Thoughtful questions, taking it to their team, but no decision date and nothing on fire. Enough contact to stay in their awareness, not so much that you become the rep who will not let go.

STALLED

Every 2 to 3 weeks

A logged “no for now.” Budget frozen, mid-project, come back in a few months. You know the trigger and roughly the date. Usually a piece of value with a light question attached.

LONG GAME

One touch per quarter

A genuine “not now.” Six months out, maybe a year. No urgency and no trigger you are waiting on. Feels like too little. It is exactly enough to stay real without becoming noise.

THE RULE

Climb down a rung. Keep the rhythm. Never disappear.

When a deal slows, move it down deliberately and say so. “Sounds like the timing shifted. I will check back in a week rather than tomorrow. Does that work?” A deal on the long-game rung is still in your pipeline. A deal you vanished from is in someone else’s.

WHEN THEY ARE ACTUALLY REACHABLE

Business owners

Before 8am or after 5pm. Mid-rush is the worst possible time.

Corporate buyers

Tuesday to Wednesday, mid-morning. Wednesday around 10am is the peak.

Consumers

Weekday evenings, Saturday morning, early Sunday.

General patterns, not laws of physics. The pattern in when each specific person actually replies to you is your real window. B2B runs on the work calendar, budget cycles and fiscal years. B2C runs on life rhythms, paydays and seasons. The cadence serves them, not you.

ASK YOURSELF, EVERY DEAL, EVERY WEEK

- What rung is this deal on today?
 - When is this specific person actually reachable, based on their world, not mine?
 - When did I last touch this deal, and when is the next one scheduled?
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The Board

Your top five open deals. A rung each. Every touch scheduled before you put this down.

DEAL	RUNG (H / W / S / LG)	LAST TOUCH	NEXT TOUCH	WHAT I WILL SEND
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

WHAT COUNTS AS A TOUCH

A touch carries something: a relevant insight, a question tied to their situation, a piece of proof, a re-open of something they said. Sending “just checking in” eight times is not eight touches. It is one bad touch, repeated.

THE REFLEX

Schedule the next touch before you close the window on the last one.

If it does not get scheduled in the moment, it does not get scheduled at all. Your future self will be exactly as busy as you are right now.

THE FRIDAY TEN MINUTES

- ☐ Do I have coverage on every hot deal next week?
- ☐ Are the warm ones accounted for?
- ☐ Has any stalled deal slipped past its touch date?
- ☐ Which deal have I not scheduled in three weeks? That is the one I am about to vanish from.

Openers by Depth

Three days of quiet and three months of quiet are not the same thing.

TOUCH TWO · MOMENTUM QUESTIONS

The deal is fresh and the energy was there. Do not ask whether it is alive. Assume it is and pick up where you left off.

- How did the internal conversation go after we talked?
 - Did you get a chance to pull those numbers we talked about?
 - What stood out to you most after you had time to think it over?
 - Has anything changed on your end since we talked?
 - Where are you at on this after sitting with it for a bit?
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TOUCH FIVE · STATUS QUESTIONS

You have shown up several times and delivered value, so you have earned the right to be direct. Locate the deal without being aggressive.

- Is this still on your radar for this quarter, or has it moved to the next one?
 - What is the current priority level on this compared to when we first talked?
 - Where does this sit with you right now on a scale of one to ten?
 - Has something come up that has shifted the timeline?
 - Is the decision on this still yours to make, or has it moved to someone else?
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TOUCH NINE · HONESTY QUESTIONS

The polite dancing has run its course. Give them full permission to tell you the truth, whatever it is.

- Should I take this off my active list, or is there still something worth pursuing here?
- I have been following up because I believe this could be a real fit. Does that still feel true on your side?
- What would need to change for this to become a real conversation again?
- If we are honest with each other, where does this stand?

Three Moves and a Blacklist

The reason they went quiet is almost never the reason they gave you.

SURFACE THE REAL STALL

Lower the cost of honesty. The third option is the one that unlocks the real conversation, because it gives permission for the answer they were afraid to say.

- Is the holdup the money, the timing, or something nobody has said out loud yet?
 - On a practical level, what is the one thing that would need to be different for this to move forward?
 - If I am being direct with you, what is actually in the way?
 - You have been thoughtful throughout this process. What is your honest gut on it?
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THE ASSUMPTION FLIP

State the pessimistic assumption and let them correct you. People correct a wrong assumption faster than they answer an open question. Keep the pessimism honest, never manufactured.

- Should I assume the timing is wrong and close the file on this?
 - If I have not heard back, I will assume you have gone another direction. Is that the case?
 - Based on the silence, I am guessing something came up on your end that made this less urgent. Fair?
 - I may have missed the window on this. Has the conversation moved on without me?
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THEIR OWN WORDS · THE MASTER KEY

In the first conversation log three things: a TIMELINE, an OBSTACLE, a PRIORITY. Return one of them with a question attached. This cannot be mistaken for a mass email.

- You told me the team was stretched thin through the end of the quarter. Is the dust settling? (timeline)
 - You mentioned your partner had not been brought in yet. Did you get a chance to loop them in? (obstacle)
 - You said speed was the biggest thing. Is that still where it sits? (priority)
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NEVER OPEN WITH

“Just checking in.” No question, nothing to react to, and it reads as an apology for reaching out.

“Any update?” Puts the whole burden on them. If they had an update they would have sent it.

“Bumping this to the top of your inbox.” Signals a sequence, not a human. They know it is template number four.

Your Personal Top Ten

The framework is universal. The words are yours. Write these in your own language.

2 FROM TOUCH-TWO MOMENTUM

1. _____
2. _____

3 FROM TOUCH-FIVE STATUS

3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2 FROM TOUCH-NINE HONESTY

6. _____
7. _____

1 ASSUMPTION FLIP

8. _____

2 BUILT FROM THEIR OWN WORDS

9. _____
 10. _____
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Most people read. Few people rep. The reader who builds this list, keeps it somewhere visible, and uses it on real deals in the next week is operating at a different level than the reader who moves on to the next chapter with good intentions. Build the list today.

The Scoreboard

Imperfect data beats no data. Five columns, five minutes, once a week.

DEAL	TOUCHES	CHANNEL	REPLY Y / N	WHAT WENT OUT, WHAT CAME BACK

THIS WEEK

Total touches sent

Best channel this week

Total replies received

Deals revived from silence

Reply rate (replies ÷ touches)

Deals abandoned this week

THE FOUR NUMBERS THAT MATTER

Touches per closed deal. Reply rate per touch type. Deals revived from silence. And the hard one: deals lost to no follow-up. For every deal that died this month, answer honestly, did they say no, or did I stop asking? Losses and abandonments are not the same thing. Log them separately.

THE FRIDAY REVIEW · FIVE MINUTES

What worked?

What did not?

What changes Monday?

Name it specifically. “Texts on Tuesday morning produced three replies” is useful. “Follow-up went well” is decoration. One or two changes on Monday, not five.