



DEALS GONE DARK

HOW TO RECONNECT WITH PROSPECTS
AND RESCUE STALLED PIPELINE

Videolicious ✨

Introduction

The success of any sales team depends on a healthy sales pipeline. A pipeline filled with the right amount of quality leads that progress smoothly toward closed deals is both highly coveted and hard won. It takes a refined process of trial and error to develop the process that makes your pipeline run efficiently.

However, like any well-oiled machine, the slightest upset in your sales pipeline can throw the whole system off, making your job as a sales leader even harder than it already is. There's nothing more frustrating for a well-functioning sales pipeline than deals that don't progress toward close. Stalled deals can clog your pipeline with prospects that take up your team's time and energy, as well as throw off the forecasting metrics you use to gauge the health and value of your pipeline overall.

Most stalled deals are caused by a prospect's delay tactics. If the lead doth protest too much, that's usually a signal to up your sales game and cut through the prospect's objections or uncertainties around your product in order to close the deal. After all, that's part of the job: to understand your prospects needs and read between the lines of everything they say.

But what if they don't say anything? What if a prospect closes all lines of communication? If

your prospect won't respond by email, phone, or social media, what do you do? How do you sell to someone who simply won't be sold to?

We call these scenarios Deals Gone Dark, and they're a major pain point for both small and large sales teams. Whereas other stalled deals that get marked Closed Lost are often a sign of a salesperson's lack of tenacity, Deals Gone Dark drive otherwise diligent sales people to doubt their abilities even though they have done everything right up to the prospect disengaging. These deals are marked Closed Lost not because the salesperson didn't try every tactic they could in order to reach the prospect and close the deal. Instead, these deals are lost in spite of the salesperson trying every tactic they could in order to reach the prospect and close the deal. Sooner or later, any reasonable sales professional will recognize a lost cause and cut their losses before wasting any more time on a deal that isn't going anywhere.

According to research by LinkedIn, 24% of forecasted deals go dark. That means at any given time, almost a quarter of the deals in your pipeline are in jeopardy of stagnating without any clear explanation as to why. Unless you're betting everything on a handful of big deals in your pipeline, that 24% can have a detrimental effect on your ability to hit your sales goals. Reducing the number of deals that go dark or reviving them after they've gone dark is critical to maintaining a healthy sales pipeline.

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The goal of this white paper is three-fold:



Explain

Explain what Deals Gone Dark are, what causes them, and how to recognize them so that you can accurately account for them in your pipeline.



Discuss

Discuss how to prevent prospects from going dark so that your pipeline never has to be bogged down by them in the first place



Show

Show how you can revive Deals Gone Dark and break through the noise in order to break through to the lost prospect, reignite the conversation, and close the deal through personalized, engaging communication.



What Are Deals Gone Dark?

So what is a Deal Gone Dark and how is it different than other stalled deals in your pipeline?

Imagine this scenario: your team has been in regular contact with a prospect and things seem to be going well. They've demoed the product, supported their pitch with case studies and data, and effectively communicated the value proposition. The prospect has expressed interest; maybe they've even given a verbal commitment and now you're just waiting for the deal to close.

Then the prospect goes dark. The day your rep was supposed to have a follow-up call to finalize the deal, the prospect doesn't dial in. Your rep follows up with an email to make sure everything's okay, but they get no response. A few days later your reps sends another email to confirm a new day and time for the call, but still no response. A week goes by, and then another week goes by. You're getting to the end of the quarter, and you're starting to ask your rep where they are with this sale that they forecasted. Eventually, you step in yourself. You call the prospect and leave voicemails on both their business and personal lines. You even like all their posts on LinkedIn and Twitter, anything to let the prospect know you're still there. But no matter what you do, the prospect remains obstinately silent, forcing you to finally accept, sometimes months later, that you've lost the deal.

A Deal Gone Dark is characterized by a sudden and unexpected halt in communication and engagement from the prospect. Whereas other stalls involve rescheduled appointments or excess reasons (read: excuses) from prospects about why they're taking so long to close, Deals Gone Dark come on without any clear explanation. These are not cold leads that signed up for your newsletter on your website and then



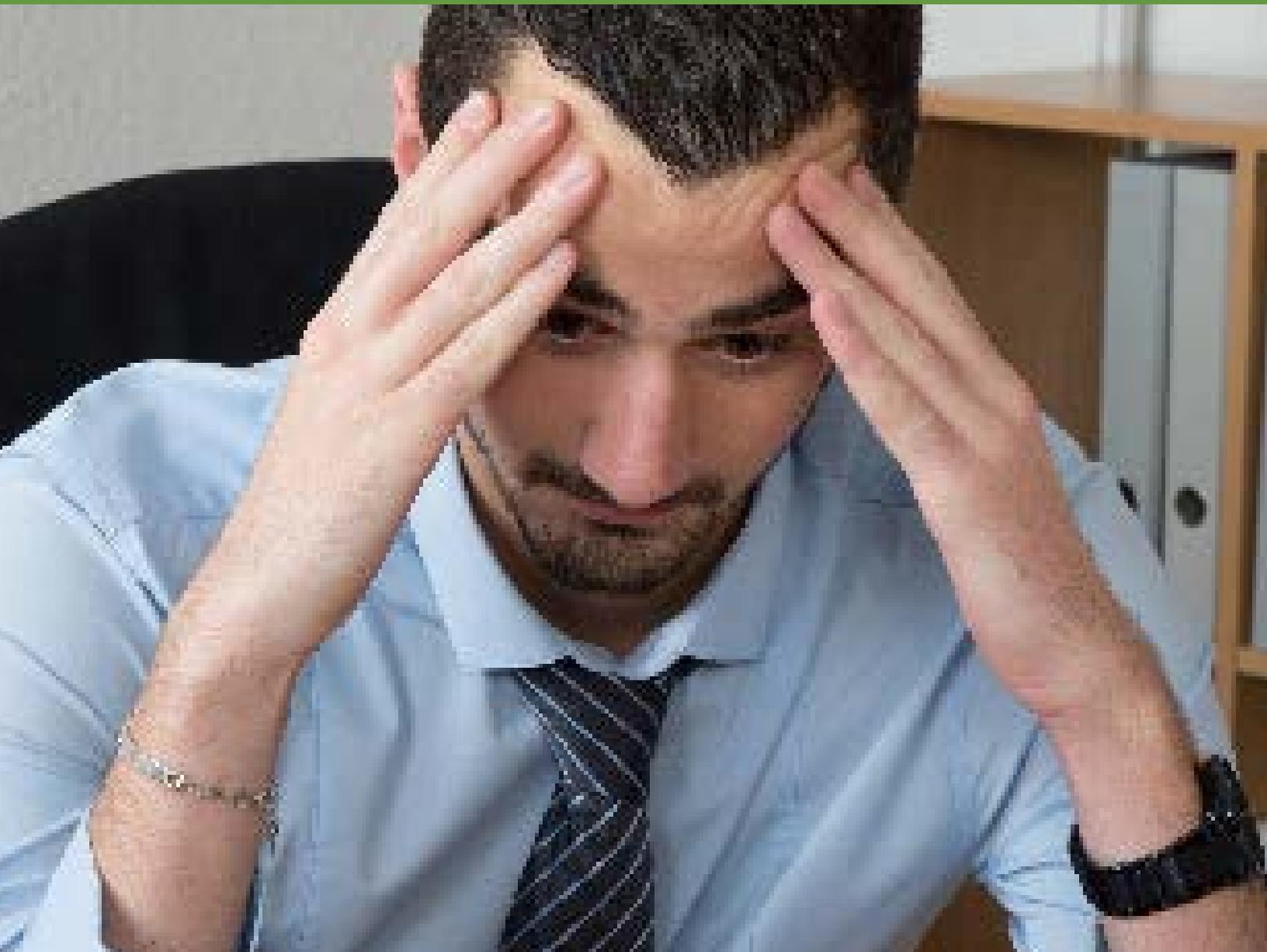
never interacted with your company again. These are prospects that your team has spoken to and received positive indication from. At one point, they seemed like they were sure things, until one day they go silent to leave you wondering what went wrong.

Deals Gone Dark can be incredibly frustrating for sales leaders. Whereas other delay tactics give salespeople an opportunity to assuage concerns and offer compromises to get the deal, the Always Be Closing method doesn't work if your prospect refuses to engage with your team. When deals go dark, they can mess up sales forecasts, stagnate pipelines, and ultimately cost lost earnings and wasted time hunting down silent prospects.

As frustrating as Deals Gone Dark are, they happen for a reason. Understanding why they happen can help prevent prospects from going dark, keeping deals moving swiftly through your pipeline and keeping your sales quotas on schedule.

Why Deals Go Dark (And How To Stop It)

There are many reasons why a prospect might suddenly disengage, some of which you can control for and some you can't. In other words, sometimes prospects disengage because of how you sell to them. Other times they disengage for reasons that haven't been made clear in the sales process.



Here are some reasons that deals go dark that you can control for.

1. You focused on the size of your pipeline instead of the quality of its contents

This is a common mistake made by sales teams. While size is an important factor to the health of your pipeline, focusing on size alone will actually hurt your pipeline in the long run. It doesn't matter how many deals you have in the pipeline; if it's weighed down by prospects that have gone dark because they weren't qualified to begin with, your forecasting will be significantly skewed and you'll have to work even harder to close other deals to make up for the ones that have disengaged.



Instead of maximizing the size of your pipeline, maximize the number of quality leads entering your pipeline. This can be done by reviewing your deal history and identifying key determiners for success. By doing this, you'll have a clearer understanding of your buyer persona, which you can then communicate back to your marketing team so that they can target the kinds of prospects that will move smoothly through your pipeline. It'll also help you to identify unqualified prospects early on in your sales cycle, saving you time that you can allocate to deals that are more likely to close.

2. You haven't fostered your contacts into relationships

Making a contact is just the first step in the sales process. Relying on someone you barely know to help drive the sale is a Deal Gone Dark waiting to happen; if a contact doesn't know you and trust you, they can disengage from you without a second thought. By fostering relationships with your contacts early on, you're paving a foundation of trust that you can later build on, one that will keep your prospect engaged and help close the deal.

So you met the director of marketing of that one company at a conference a couple years ago and maybe that's enough to get a meeting, but what have you done to foster that relationship? Have you connected on LinkedIn and Twitter? Have you shared their content on your own channels? Have you emailed them any articles that you think they might be interested in? What about just sending a text asking how they've been? Simple strategies like these go a long way in fostering relationships with your contacts, leading to smoother deals that don't go dark.

3. You skipped steps in your sales process

Your sales process is in place for a reason; it's a proven sequence of steps to maximize your Closed Won deals and make sure everyone on your team is following an established procedure so that wins and losses can be accurately quantified and analyzed.

Every now and then, however, a dream prospect will come along that will make special requests and upset the regular flow of your sales process. While this might be tempting, especially with high-value contracts, skipping steps causes deals to go dark. When you deviate from your process, you interrupt your cadence and your prospect is no longer funneled through your pipeline effectively. This can cause them to lose interest, disengage, and go dark. The best way to keep your prospects engaged and your deals moving smoothly through your pipeline toward close is to follow your sales process to the letter.

4. You didn't effectively communicate the value proposition

Everyone has their off days. It's not uncommon for a prospect's initial interest in a product or service to wane after a less-than-stellar demo or sales pitch. Maybe one of your reps wasn't prepared enough for a meeting or they didn't have enough background information to fully understand the client's potential use case of your product. In either case, if the prospect doesn't see the value in your product, than they're all the more likely to fall off and disengage.

This is Sales 101: make sure your reps do their homework so that you and your team fully understand the background and needs of your prospects before ever taking a meeting with them. By effectively communicating your value proposition and providing solutions to each of the prospect's desired outcomes, you will keep them engaged while simultaneously giving them no reason to go dark on you.

5. You didn't ask for a commitment

Your rep demoed the product and had several follow-up calls with key decision-makers. Your rep feels confident that they see the value in your product; a deal is sure to follow. So your rep leaves that final meeting open-ended, certain that after allowing some time for the brilliance of the pitch to sink in, they will be ready to sign a contract.

Most salespeople don't ask for a commitment from their prospect, yet they're surprised when those prospects go dark. Without a commitment to buy or a plan to move forward, it's natural for bigger priorities to take precedent in the minds of your prospects. After all, they don't have the same deadline or pressure to buy as you do to sell. To keep them from going dark on you, make sure your reps keep them engaged and ask for a commitment.

There are cases when you do everything right and still your prospect goes dark. These prospects go dark because of factors outside of your deal, factors that you weren't aware of that the prospect didn't communicate. As you will see in the following examples, there are still strategies you can try to keep the prospect from going dark.

The prospect wasn't a decision maker

It happens to the best of us; your rep makes contact with a prospect who is eager about your product and wants to buy it but first has to check up the ladder to get approval. When they never get that approval (or, more likely, when they never had authority to be speaking with your rep in the first place), they go dark, too embarrassed to come back with a "no" when they already said "yes."

These deals can still be salvaged! When the prospect says they have to get permission, make sure your rep gets a commitment for a follow-up meeting before they have the chance to go dark. Offer to give another demo of the product with the decision maker present or ask for an email introduction.

Do whatever you can before they leave the meeting and you never hear from them again.

The prospect can't afford what you're selling

This one can be tricky. When a prospect is upfront about not being able to afford to buy from you, that's usually means they're either trying to get a better price, or they still don't understand the value of your product or service. In either case, the prospect is giving you something to work with, either to negotiate a different price or to better communicate your value proposition.

When a deal goes dark over price, they're usually avoiding the uncomfortable position of explaining they really can't afford what you're selling. Maybe they see the value as you've presented it to them, but they are so bootstrapped that buying your product or service at any price doesn't make financial sense. Tact and discernment are your friends in situations like these; do everything you can to read your prospect's situation in order to clearly understand their needs and challenges before they go dark.

The prospect doesn't trust salespeople

It's a competitive world, and the average businessperson is routinely bombarded by promotions, advertisements, spam, and pitches. It's understandable that some prospects would become jaded by all that noise and simply turn off at the idea of listening to another person trying to sell them on another product. After all, they're just another number in someone's CRM. There's nothing special about the salesperson's interactions with them, so why wouldn't they go dark?

That's it! You've now done everything you can to spot and prevent Deals Gone Dark. By doing all this, you will have successfully kept stalls out of your pipeline and fully preserved that 24% of forecasted deals...right?

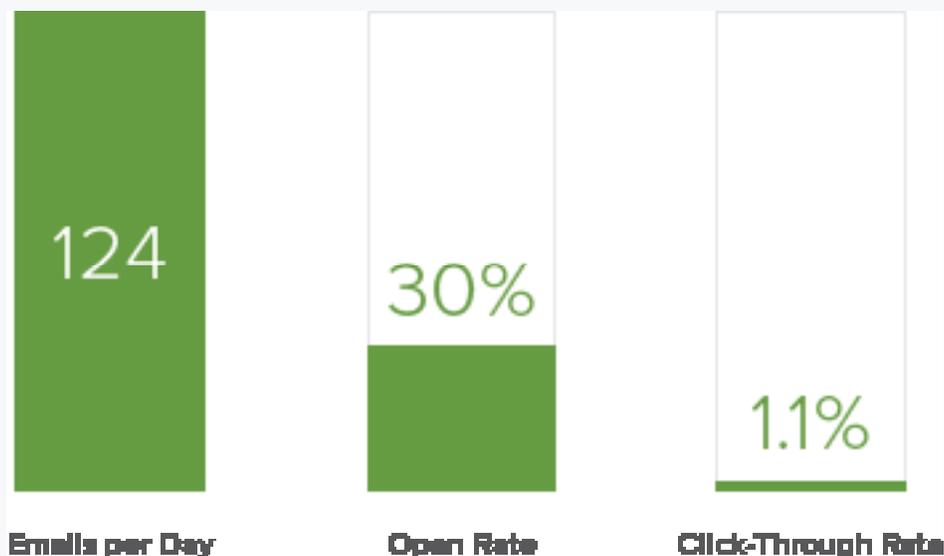
Nope! Deals will still go dark, no matter what you do. Even when you do everything to properly engage the prospect and show value, some prospects will still disengage and fall off. But there's still hope; before you mark them Closed Lost, there's still a chance to re-engage your customer and revive your Deal Gone Dark.

How to Revive Deals Gone Dark

If reviving Deals Gone Dark were easy, everyone would do it, and no sales team's pipeline would be burdened with 24% of its forecasted deals in stagnation. Unfortunately, this isn't the case; getting through to a prospect who has gone dark is hard work and requires both creativity and tenacity in order to break through the noise.



According to research gathered by the Radicati Group, in 2017, the average person receives about 124 emails per day. That's a lot to contend with when trying to revive a Deal Gone Dark. Compounded by the fact that email open rates are below 30% and click-through rates hover around 1.1%, it's now harder than ever to make your communications to your prospects stand out. This is the exact reason why your emails with subject lines like "Following up" and "Touching base" are getting overlooked or outright ignored; the prospect has more immediate concerns to attend to in their inbox.



So how then do you reignite a conversation with a prospect without blowing up their inbox with a stream of annoying (and increasingly desperate) emails? There are three keys to keep in mind when attempting to revive a Deal Gone Dark:



First, be sure to offer some sort of unique value in follow up communication. As you've probably already seen, emails whose only purpose is to "follow up" get deleted or ignored. Use the communication as a chance to build off of previous conversations that you've already had with the prospect and offer something new that the prospect will find valuable. This could be a new feature of your product or a report that you've compiled to further communicate the value proposition.

Second, make sure communication with the prospect is highly personalized. Lead with something personal you've learned about or previously discussed with the prospect; this can be a questions about something they've shared in your previous conversations (family, pets, sports, etc.), an article or video you found that is useful to their role, or changes in their job or organization

Finally, you have to make communication engaging. Personalization will only take you so far; ultimately, an email is just another email, so you have to add something that grabs the prospect's attention. One of the best ways to do this is through video. According to research from Experian, just including the word "video" in an email subject line has been proven to increase click-thru rates by 7-13%. Furthermore, embedding a video in an email increases the email's conversion rate by an average of 21%. Video is also a great opportunity to further personalize your communication with a prospect; by recording a video message addressed to the prospect, you further show empathy. Salespeople are, by trade, communicators, and video allows them to optimize their communication with prospects. Rather than relying on drab black-and-white text, it puts a face to the person they are ignoring, making it more difficult to stay dark without any reply. It is easy to ignore an email, harder to ignore a person.

According to research from Experian

just including the word
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However, not everyone is a video expert, and sending a poorly produced video shot with a shaky hand from your smartphone or a messy desk with your webcam, could potentially yield worse results than not sending a video at all. Fortunately, there's Videolicious, a comprehensive solution for producing high quality personalized video. With Videolicious, your reps can record and import their own videos, and Videolicious will do the rest,



automatically adding approved transitions, music, and custom assets like logos and video business cards into a seamless video that will impress and impact your prospect. Once your video is complete, Videolicious makes it easy to send your video along with a personalized email

Emails sent with a video from Videolicious have seen increases in response rates of up to 267%



Open Rate
Increase



Click Rate
Increase



Response Rate
Increase

Conclusion

Deals Gone Dark are an inevitability in the world of sales, but it gives us an opportunity to strengthen our relationship-building skills necessary for any great salesperson. The key for any deal is to engage personally and foster relationships with your prospects.

As mounting distractions and signals in the digital world continue to vie for your customer's attention, it is essential to adapt and adopt new modes of communication in order to stay not only competitive, but also relevant. Video is no longer a passing fad. Rather, it represents a paradigm shift in the way business is done and it will continue to radically change the way we interact and do business with each other.

Videolicious allows your sales team to fully unlock the power of video with the same tools they carry around in their pockets every

day, while giving their managers to control the quality and types of videos they can create. With Videolicious included in your sales stack, you have a powerful tool to engage your prospects, reviving Deals Gone Dark, but also, keeping them too engaged to go dark on you in the first place. The future of Deals Gone Dark is now looking much brighter.

For more information on how Videolicious can help you save and avoid Deals Gone Dark, visit us at <https://dealsgonedark.com>.



Ready to revive your deals gone dark?

Schedule a call with one of our representatives today to starting planning your personalized video outreach strategy.

Schedule a Call