

Making
conversations
happen with
outbound dialling



Making conversations happen with outbound dialling

When agents have conversations with customers, good things happen. They close more deals, secure more payments and create more trust. With that in mind, the role of your outbound dialler is to maximise the time agents spend having those conversations.

A good dialler solution will take away the legwork involved in connecting agents and customers. It can control the entire calling process up to the point when a client answers the phone, at which point it passes the call to your agent.

By letting agents get on with what they do best, it can make your outbound operation massively more efficient. In fact, auto diallers can improve agent productivity by between 200% and 300% compared to manual dialling. They can ensure your agents spend two or three times longer actually talking to clients on the phone, rather than dialling numbers, leaving messages or arranging call-backs.

But not all auto diallers are the same. The best dialler software offers different modes to suit different use case scenarios.

They also help you to maintain the delicate balance between productivity and compliance. In the rest of this ebook we'll delve into detail on the different diallers available, and how the best solutions can help you achieve the holy grail of outbound calling: more agents having more conversations with engaged clients.

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What is an outbound dialler?

These days, an outbound dialler is generally a cloud or software solution that automatically makes calls on behalf of your sales, collection or customer service teams. As such, it's an essential ingredient in any organisation where you need to make outbound calls to clients and prospects throughout the day.

Why? Most obviously, by automating the dialling process you allow your agents to make a far higher volume of calls than would otherwise be possible. Your outbound dialler can dial numbers and screen for unanswered calls and voicemails, and will only connect to an agent when a real person answers the phone. By cleverly crunching data, it can also filter out the worst leads and help your agents focus on those that are most likely to result in a positive outcome.

Those are huge benefits on their own, but they're far from the only ones. Modern cloud and software diallers can be tweaked to help you achieve different results. Different diallers (or dialler modes) can be adopted by different teams (or individual agents) with contrasting functions, whether that's late payment collection, contract renewals, new sales, post-sales service or anything else.

The optimum functionality of your outbound dialler very much depends on the type of outbound calls you want to make. Over the next pages there's a rundown of the most common dialler modes.



What is an outbound dialler?



Predictive dialler

What is it?

When most people think of outbound dialling software, they tend to think of predictive dialling. Predictive dialling places calls based on the software's predictions of agent availability. It dials multiple numbers simultaneously, so that when agents finish one call they can be instantly connected to the next.

Predictive dialling is hugely efficient. At its heart is an algorithm that is constantly crunching data to refine the rate at which calls are made, with the aim of ensuring that, if a customer answers a call, there's always an agent available to take it, but that no agent is sitting twiddling their thumbs. This dialling rate is adjusted in real time to take into account the ebb and flow of the working day.

What is it used for?

However sophisticated the algorithm, predictive dialling inevitably leads to some abandoned calls - when a customer answers the phone but there isn't an agent available to speak to them. There are strict rules around abandoned calls and heavy fines for businesses that ignore them, so you must ensure that your predictive dialler is compliant. It should automatically slow the dialling rate if too many calls are abandoned.

Nevertheless, predictive dialling is the gold standard for straightforward, high volume sales campaigns (like commodity sales). It can quickly and efficiently work through large datasets, making sure leads are contacted while they're still warm. The best predictive diallers minimise abandoned calls (and the amount of time customers spend on hold) and maximise the time your agents spend having conversations. They can be set to play messages if they meet an answerphone, and will recycle numbers (placing unanswered calls back into the call queue) in a way that ensures your customers or leads are contacted, but never pestered.

What is an outbound dialler?



Progressive dialler

What is it?

Progressive diallers are predictive diallers that slow the pace down by only dialling a number when an agent is available to take the call. Dialling is instant and automatic, so the system still allows for a relatively high number of calls, but also eliminates the risk of customers abandoning calls or waiting a frustratingly long time before being connected to an agent.

As with other diallers, calls that go to voicemail can be automatically and instantly disconnected, and 'no answers' are disconnected after a predefined time.

What is it used for?

Progressive dialling is lower volume than predictive dialling, so is often used in campaigns that target current customers. It's a low risk option that can improve customer experience, help nurture loyalty and effectively help agents upsell additional products and services. Because an agent is always available to have a conversation, the customers you have painstakingly nurtured over a period of time feel valued and important.



Preview dialler

What is it?

A preview dialler takes the pace down another notch. When an agent indicates availability, information about the next call is sent to the agent for preview. After a set amount of time - say, one minute - the number is automatically dialled.

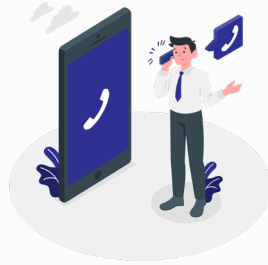
The purpose of this delay is to let the agent prepare for the call, using information typically taken from the company CRM system. Armed with this knowledge, agents can have more in-depth, focused conversations, based on a customer's real experiences and challenges. It can improve customer experience and increase the number of positive outcomes.

What is it used for?

Preview diallers are particularly helpful when the reason for the call is complex or sensitive. For example, following up with web leads or dealing with customer complaint calls are both more likely to end positively if agents are armed with all the information they need beforehand. In a B2B setting, preview diallers are also useful for helping agents prepare a bespoke pitch based on specific customer circumstances.

KPIs

Key Performance Indicators for a successful outbound campaign can include:



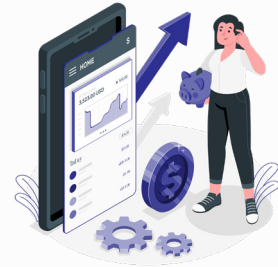
Connect Rate

The percentage of successfully connected calls compared to the number of attempted calls.



Contact Rate

The percentage of quality connected calls compared to the number of attempted calls. This reveals the quality of leads over time.



Conversion Rate

The percentage of positive outcomes (sales, payment collection etc) compared to the number of connected calls.



Sale or Success Per Hour (SPH)

The number of sales or successes generated divided by the number of hours worked.

Other factors to consider?

Ideally, your chosen outbound dialler will let you switch between these modes at will. Cloud-based diallers are often most flexible in this regard, allowing agents to access the same features and dialling modes wherever they are, and on a range of devices.

But as well as offering predictive, progressive and preview dialling, any good outbound solution should help you with the following challenges:

Blended contact centres

One of the main causes of dropped or abandoned calls is the simultaneous operation of an outbound and inbound contact centre. Your predictive dialling algorithm can be thrown out of kilter by inbound calls making agents unavailable. This can increase the incidence of abandoned calls (and potentially lead to Ofcom sanction). You need to ensure that your outbound solution is sophisticated enough to allow agents to make and take calls without a spike in drop rates.

Agent behaviour

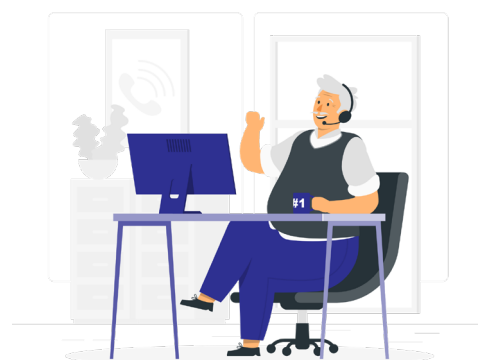
Agents logging in and out randomly is a big problem for predictive diallers. A well paced dialling algorithm that ensures agents are always available to take connected calls can be instantly undermined by a couple of agents logging out at the same time. Break times and lunch times, when agents log out in larger volumes, also need to be factored into the predictive equation.

Right contact right time

Generally, the more time agents spend talking to clients, the better it is for your business. But a good outbound dialler will also help you improve 'right contact right time' rates. Talking to anyone isn't good enough. You want your agents to talk to decision makers as often as possible. Outbound software can help by collecting data on the best times to call to connect to the right people. It can help build a picture that not only suggests optimal calling patterns, but also tests the accuracy of your data and marketing information.

Call limits

Pestering people with calls will shred your reputation and eventually get you into trouble with Ofcom. A software dialler can ensure that doesn't happen, by automatically deactivating numbers after a defined number of unsuccessful calls or, if dropped calls are an issue, ensuring an agent is always available the next time a previously unanswered number is dialled.



The MaxContact difference

MaxContact offers the most sophisticated outbound dialler currently available. Our continually improving cloud-based solution gives you the flexibility to run your contact centre your way, letting you choose the right blend of productivity and compliance for your business needs. With over a 1,000 unique features, MaxContact's outbound dialler helps meet your contact centre challenges in new and powerful ways. Here are just a few of the features that make MaxContact different:

Mixed dialling modes

Our solution can automatically switch between predictive and preview modes, ensuring that repeat calls to previously dialled numbers are only carried out in the presence of an agent, guaranteeing compliance.

Un-droppable dialling

Our unique, built in patent pending features reduce the chances of dropped calls, while not affecting performance. Advances in our dialling algorithm can be used even in the most demanding predictive blended environments, allowing your agents to take and make calls without the concern of drop rates increasing.

Agents request next actions

Our solution eliminates dropped calls based on agent behaviour by asking agents to request to log out of the system. By doing so, it ensures the predictive dialler is always in sync with available agents.

Predictive/Progressive auto change

With MaxContact, you can set a value for staffing levels that automatically changes the dialler mode from predictive to progressive when agent availability falls below a certain level, and changes it back again when staffing levels rise. Again, this lowers the risk of dropped calls while also reducing the administrative burden on your team.

DNC options

Our solution features a range of DNC (Do Not Call) options, ensuring customers are never called if they've been added to a DNC list. Our platform checks your internal DNC lists, and can also double check against Telephone Preference Service (TPS) lists. Customers can even add themselves to DNC lists without having to speak to an agent.

Custom data fetching (CDF)

CDF gives you access to powerful data segmentation, profiling and targeting options to make your campaigns more effective with less manual data management from you and your team. It enables you to use advanced calling strategies within MaxContact, without the need for multiple lists.

The MaxContact solution

These are just some of the ways MaxContact creates a perfect balance of productivity and compliance. It is an entirely flexible solution, allowing you to create the optimum outbound system for your purposes.

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For more information on MaxContact's powerful cloud-based outbound dialler, please get in touch.

