SALES, MARKETING & PR

A Case Study on Improving Founder Outreach and Follow-up in Inside Sales at Heloix Startup Minds Pvt. Ltd.

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Abstract

India has one of the largest startup ecosystems in the world, and new ventures are started every year in technology, finance, education, healthcare, logistics and many other subfields, to a significant degree. In this broader context, most of all these businesses begin with any further very small team; in fact, also, the founder ordinarily is ending up doing a bit of everything, including sales, hiring, partnerships, product decisions and even customer support, in many respects.

1 Introduction

India has one of the largest startup ecosystems in the world, and new ventures are started every year in technology, finance, education, healthcare, logistics and many other subfields, to a significant degree. In this broader context, most of all these businesses begin with any further very small team; in fact, also, the founder ordinarily is ending up doing a bit of everything, including sales, hiring, partnerships, product decisions and even customer support, in many respects.

With that, reaching one founder is not easy; many calls and messages from people who want something from them may (in practice) be received by a founder, on the whole. Their time is limited. From this perspective, for anyone doing business outreach in this space especially perhaps, the real obstacle is not finding names, and is getting the right person to listen for a minute and agree to a next step, broadly speaking.

Heloix Startup Minds Pvt. Ltd. practically exposes to this kind of work through its Associate Opportunities Program; I joined as an Inside Sales Intern for two months. Viewed through this lens, my primary task was to find early-stage startups on the Startup India portal, call their founders or CEOs, and request a short, free interview about their entrepreneurial journey, obstacles and future plans, in real-world scenarios.

This case study is grounded in that experience; it looks at how founder outreach actually worked day to day, where it slowed down, to a significant degree; indeed, also, what concrete changes could (in practical terms) make the process more uniform and productive, and is written from a student's point of view, applying what I did and gathered during the internship, to a significant degree.

2 Background of the organisation

Heloix Startup Minds Pvt. Ltd. was established in 2019 and its head office is at Hinjawadi Phase 1, Pune, Maharashtra, broadly speaking; the company is working with startups and young talent, and runs internship and associate programmes where students really task instead of only observing, in actual application.

My internship came under the Heloix Associate Opportunities Program, which is run in partnership with Crazy for Success Foundation, in actual application; on completion, interns receive an Internship Completion Certificate from Heloix, a Volunteering Certificate from Crazy for Success Foundation, and a performance-based Letter of Recommendation, on the whole. In parallel with this, the internship was unpaid and work from home, with working hours from 9:30 AM to 6:30 PM IST; the offer letter was dated 25/06/2026 and was signed by Neha Singh, Chief HR Officer.

The work of an Inside Sales Intern at Heloix entails:

- Finding early-stage startups through the Startup India portal
- Researching the company and spotting the founder or CEO
- Calling founders for the explanation of the free interview opportunity
- Showing two or three time slots when a founder reveals interest
- Sending calendar invites and reminder emails from a dedicated formal email ID
- Logging every call on a shared tracking spreadsheet (company, founder, contact number, website, status and next step)

Interns were also asked to create a separate email ID only for Heloix communication, so that outreach looked professional and personal email was kept out of it, in many respects; indeed, looking back, this small rule taught me a lot about how a company expects its representatives to behave in front of outsiders, in real-world scenarios.

3 Problem statement

A good prospect can (to some degree) be lost without anyone detecting, when any one of these is weak, on the whole; in fact, founder outreach relies on many small phases, namely choosing the right startup, finding the right person, making a clear first call, following up at the right time and keeping exact records, broadly speaking.

During the internship many startup founders were contacted, which is why only around six to seven of them agreed to an interview and completed it, in real-world scenarios, and the rest did not pick up, asked me to call later, or politely said no. This is normal in cold outreach, in real-world scenarios. Under these conditions, still, it also raised a question: how many of the missed opportunities were simply owing to bad luck; also how many could have been avoided with a better process?

The central issue tackled in this case study is:

How can Heloix Startup Minds Pvt. Ltd. sharpen its founder outreach process, chiefly the first-call approach, follow-up timing and guide monitoring, so that more founders are converted into the scheduled interviews without wasting the restricted time of interns or founders?

This case does not say that the Heloix programme is badly run; in turn, the case only looks at one applied space where small enhancements could (to a meaningful extent) visibly differ, on the whole;

indeed, the programme is giving interns a clear task, a starter guide and a monitoring format, in actual application.

4 Objectives of the case study

The major goals are:

1. To understand how inside sales and founder outreach work in an early-stage startup environment, broadly speaking.
2. To outline the outreach process followed during the internship, from research to scheduling.
3. To spot the widespread reasons why founders did not respond or did not agree to an interview, in actual application.
4. To understand why the quality of the first call matters.
5. In turning interest into a scheduled interview, to study the function of follow-up timing, in many respects.
6. To analyse how a tracking spreadsheet supports (or crashes to support) lead management.
7. To understand how rejection and non-response alter an intern's confidence and consistency.
8. To appraise concrete alternatives for boosting the outreach process.
9. To recommend a elementary and low-cost resolution that Heloix can employ to future interns, to a significant degree.
10. To connect applied internship experience with BBA concepts in marketing, sales and organisational behaviour, broadly speaking.

5 Case background

I worked as an Inside Sales Intern from 1 July to 31 August 2026, working from home during the office hours, in real-world scenarios; indeed, the assignment was clear on paper - find startups, call the founders, request an interview, schedule it, and record everything, on the whole. In practice it took some time to understand what each of those phases really needed.

5.1 How a typical day looked

A normal day started with research. I applied the Startup India portal to shortlist startups and then looked for foundational details such as what the company does, its website, broadly speaking; indeed, also who the founder or CEO is. Taken together, without this, a call sounds generic and founders ordinarily catch that quickly.

I called, and suggested two or three time slots, sent a calendar invite and a reminder email from the Heloix email ID, and modified the shared spreadsheet with the status and the next step, after research, to a significant degree.

5.2 What happened on the calls

The responses were mixed, and they were uncommonly the same. Against this backdrop, broadly, the outcomes fell into the groups:

- Founder agreed and an interview was, to be sure, scheduled and completed (around six to seven founders)

- Founder did not answer the call or the follow-up message
- Founder was, in essence, busy and asked me to call back later
- Founder was not interested or did not want to take part
- Wrong or outdated contact details, or someone other than the founder picked up

The founders who said yes were typically those who understood the offer within the first few seconds - a short, free interview, about their own journey, at a time that suits them, broadly speaking; indeed, the calls that went badly were mostly the ones where my introduction was too long, on the whole. Along these dimensions, still, i had not analyzed the company well enough.

5.3 The issue that stood out

Over the weeks something was detected. Within this framework, a request to "call later" was not a rejection; in fact, still it was easy to lose. If I did not gather a particular day and time for the next call, the guide would sit in the sheet for days, in real-world scenarios; in fact, by the time I returned, the founder had often forgotten the conversation or the moment had passed, on the whole.

The same was true for the opening. My early calls were more of a broad introduction; also my later calls were sharper, because I had learned from what founders actually responded to; that learning came only, through the trial and deviation, in many respects. In light of this dynamic, a new intern starting the programme would have to repeat the same learning curve from zero, in many respects.

Stated separately, the process hinged heavily on how each intern personally handled calls, follow-up and notes, rather than on a prevalent, tested method, to a significant degree.

Only the approximate number of completed interviews is specifically stated. Recognize, like The exact number of calls made and the exact conversion rate are not provided here because this case is predominantly grounded in concrete remark, not a formal sample, broadly speaking.

6 Analysis of the case

The outreach process can be revealed as a elementary sequence:

Prospect Identification (Startup India portal) → Research on Company and Founder → First Call and Introduction → Interest or No Interest → Follow-up and Slot Proposal → Calendar Invite and Reminder → Interview Completed → Status Updated in Tracking Sheet

A weak point at any step impacts the phases after it. As an illustration:

"Call later" request not noted with a date → Follow-up delayed → Interest is lost by founder or forgets the call → Guide is remaining pending or is substantially closed as "no response"

This is revealing that the number of completed interviews does not rely only on how many calls are made; it also rests on how well each individual guide is examined and strategied up after the first conversation, broadly speaking.

7 Major issues identified

7.1 Limited time of founders

Many responsibilities are handled by founders of early-stage startups; and thus, another call that arrives at the wrong time, or takes too long to come to the point, is easily cut short, on the whole.

Against this backdrop, many "not now" answers were, by definition, really about timing and not about the offer, in real-world scenarios.

7.2 Inconsistent first-call approach

There was no tested opening line that interns could start from; and thus, each intern had to work out what to say, how long to speak and when to ask for the interview, in many respects. In light of this dynamic, the quality of the first call therefore varied, chiefly in the first few days, to a significant degree.

7.3 Unclear follow-up timing

Follow-up hinged on the intern's memory and on how well the observe was written in the sheet, on the whole; there was normally no fixed rule about when and how to follow up, when any founder asked to be contacted later, on the whole.

7.4 Contact information problems

Some numbers were wrong, outdated or not answered by the founder, so time spent on such guides reduced the time available for better prospects, in actual application.

7.5 Note-keeping differences

Beneficial columns were had by the tracking sheet, so despite this, the quality of notes rested on the person filling it, in actual application; indeed, short remarks such as "call later" or "busy" did not say when, why, or what to say on the next call, in actual application.

7.6 Effect of rejection

Without guidance on how to handle it, one intern may, to some extent, slow down or become hesitant for the next calls, in real-world scenarios. Along these dimensions, hearing "no" or getting no response many times in a row affects motivation, and in the first week this was the hardest part for me, on the whole.

8 Root cause analysis

The primary causes can be grouped in what follows manner:

Table 1. Root causes of the outreach problem.

Factor	Possible Cause
People	Interns are students with little or no prior sales-calling experience
Process	No common call opening or follow-up rule shared across interns
Information	Startup contact details may be outdated or incomplete
Tracking	Free-text notes without a fixed “next action and date” format
Timing	Calls made without knowing when a founder is likely to be available
Support	Limited guidance on handling rejection and non-response

Central Root Cause:

The outreach process counted on individual effort and personal learning rather of a uncomplicated, shared approach for the first call, follow-up and note-keeping, in real-world scenarios.

9 Impact of the problem

9.1 Impact on founders

- Calls that arrive without clear setting can, strictly speaking, are feeling like an interruption
- A poor impression of the programme may, in practice, arguably be left by repeated or badly timed follow-ups

9.2 Impact on interns

- A slow start and a longer learning curve
- Lower confidence after repeated rejection
- Time wasted on wrong contacts and unorganised directs

9.3 Impact on Heloix

- Fewer completed interviews than the effort put in
- Distinct outreach quality from intern to intern
- The company's name is, put simply, embodied by people with diverse levels of preparation

9.4 Impact on programme learning

- Interns are spending early weeks learning elementaries that could be shared on day one
- Valuable lessons from one intern are normally not passed to the next batch

10 SWOT analysis

The SWOT below is grounded in the founder outreach activity only, which is why it is not an assessment of the whole company, on the whole.

Table 2. SWOT analysis: strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clear task given to every intern	No fixed call opening or follow-up rule
Starter guide and shared tracking sheet	Notes vary from person to person
Free interview is an easy offer for founders to accept	Contact details may be outdated
Real practice in a real business setting	Interns are new to sales calling

Table 3. SWOT analysis: opportunities and threats.

Opportunities	Threats
Simple call framework for new interns	Founders ignoring unknown callers
“Next action + date” in the tracking sheet	Loss of warm leads due to late follow-up
Sharing tips between interns	Intern demotivation from repeated rejection

Opportunities	Threats
Using email and messages along with calls	Poor impression if outreach is not professional

11 Alternative solutions

Three possible results can be considered.

11.1 Alternative 1: Standard call framework

Give every intern a short guide for the first call; it need not be a word-by-word script, and should cover the four elementaries, such as who is generally calling, why this startup was chosen, what is being requested, broadly speaking, and also, how long it will take.

Advantages:

- Easy to prepare at almost no cost
- Saves the new intern from starting from zero
- Makes the first call clearer and shorter

Limitations:

- A fixed architecture can sound mechanical if followed too strictly
- Does not tackle follow-up and tracking issues

11.2 Alternative 2: Structured follow-up and tracking

Add two needed details in the tracking sheet for every direct that is not closed, like the next action and the exact date and time of that action, to a significant degree. Leads that are saying “call later” would be sorted and reviewed daily.

Advantages:

- Fewer warm guides get lost
- Easy to check what needs to be done today
- Helps the company see where guides are, in this setting, stuck

Limitations:

- Needs discipline from every intern
- Does not sharpen the quality of the call itself

11.3 Alternative 3: Peer learning and weekly review

Run a short weekly session where interns are sharing what worked, what did not, on the whole; in fact, also which openings got a positive response. Against this backdrop, feedback can, in practice, be added by mentors and help with the emotional side of rejection, in actual application.

Advantages:

- Spreads good practice quickly
- Builds confidence and a sense of team
- Turns rejection into the learning

Limitations:

- Takes time from everyone's schedule
- Works best when interns are, in effect, comfortable sharing honestly

12 Recommended solution

The most concrete method is to combine all three in a light form:

Standard Call Framework + Structured Follow-up Tracking + Weekly Peer Review

None of all these needs a new software tool or any major cost; and thus, they only are needing small changes to what already exists, namely a one-page guide, two extra columns in the shared sheet, and a short weekly conversation, broadly speaking.

The suggested framework would encompass:

- **First-call framework:** A one-page guide covering introduction, reason for choosing the startup, the request, and the time needed.
- **Pre-call research checklist:** Company name, what it does, founder's name, website and a one-line point to mention, in real-world scenarios.
- **Next action and date:** Every open guide must have a clear next step with a date and time, broadly speaking.
- **Follow-up rule:** A fixed strategy for "call later" requests, as an illustration a reminder email followed by a second call on the agreed day, in many respects.
- **Contact check:** Mark wrong or outdated numbers so that other interns do not repeat the same attempt, on the whole.
- **Weekly review:** A short meeting to share experiences and advantageous lines.
- **Rejection handling tips:** A few applied ways to respond politely and move on.

As, a personal recommendation, i would also propose that new interns listen to or read one or two examples of successful calls before they start and would have found this very helpful in my first week, in many respects.

13 Role of professional communication in the proposed system

A better process should not make calls sound like a script being read out, in many respects. Founders respond to people, not to templates. In parallel with this, the suggested framework is only meant to give interns a starting point, so that they can spend their energy on listening and responding.

The elementary tenets that worked best during my internship were:

- Be clear about who you are. Also, why you are, by design, calling within the first few seconds.
- Respect the founder's time and say how long it will take.
- Ask for a better time rather of repeating the pitch, if the founder is routinely busy, in real-world scenarios.
- Follow up on the exact day that was agreed.
- Thank the founder for their time, even after a "no".

Rejection is consistently part of outreach. The aim is commonly not to avoid every "no". It is to make sure that a "no" is a real answer from the founder and not this finding of a badly timed or unclear call.

14 Implementation plan

The changes can be introduced in uncomplicated stages.

14.1 Phase 1 – Collect learning from past interns

Gather the opening lines, follow-up techniques and widespread responses from interns who have already completed the programme, in real-world scenarios.

14.2 Phase 2 – Prepare the guide and checklist

Prepare the one-page call framework and the pre-call research checklist.

14.3 Phase 3 – Update the tracking sheet

Add columns for “next action”, “date and time” and “contact status” (valid, wrong number, not reachable), on the whole.

14.4 Phase 4 – Orientation for new interns

Explain the framework on day one and share a few real examples of calls, in many respects.

14.5 Phase 5 – Weekly review

Hold a short review each week to explore progress and obstacles, alongside ideas.

14.6 Phase 6 – Continuous improvement

Update the guide every batch grounded in what is notably working.

15 Expected benefits

15.1 For founders

- Shorter and clearer calls
- Follow-ups at agreed times
- A more professional experience

15.2 For interns

- Faster start and more confidence
- Less time wasted on unorganised directs
- Better handling of rejection

15.3 For Heloix

- More completed interviews for the same effort
- More coherent quality across the interns
- Better visibility of where guides are stuck

16 Key performance indicators

The finding of the changes can be verified applying elementary measures:

Table 4. Key performance indicators.

KPI	Purpose
Calls made per day	Measures activity
Number of founders reached	Measures contact quality
Number of “call later” leads followed up on time	Measures follow-up discipline
Interviews scheduled	Measures conversion of interest
Interviews completed	Measures final outcome
Wrong or unreachable contacts	Measures data quality

As, an illustration, if more "call later" leads become scheduled interviews after the new follow-up rule is applied, it would reveal that the rule is working, to a significant degree.

17 Ethical and professional considerations

Founder outreach entails contacting people who did not ask to be contacted. In light of this dynamic, the following tenets should be followed:

- Outline the programme honestly and do not promise anything that is systematically not part of it, in real-world scenarios.
- Respect a clear "no" and do not keep calling the same person.
- Keep founder contact details and call notes, within the programme and employ them only for the stated purpose, in actual application.
- Apply the formal Heloix email ID for all communication, not a personal one.
- Be polite and professional, because the intern represents the company and the foundation.

18 Learning from the case

That internship taught me a few things that I could not have learned from a textbook.

18.1 Research makes the call easier

Even two minutes of research on a startup made the conversation feel more natural, so also, founders could, in practice, tell that I had taken the trouble, in real-world scenarios.

18.2 Follow-up matters as much as the first call

Many opportunities are typically not won or lost on the first call, and they rely on whether someone follows up properly and on time, in real-world scenarios.

18.3 Rejection is not personal

A "no" ordinarily meant the founder was busy or not interested at that moment. Viewed through this lens, also, once I understood this, the next person could be called with a calmer mind.

18.4 Records are part of selling

A good tracking sheet is reliably not just paperwork, which is why it is telling you who to call, when and what to say, broadly speaking.

18.5 Communication is a skill that improves with practice

The only way to get there was by doing it, and my calls in the last weeks were clearer, shorter and more confident than my calls in the first week, on the whole.

19 Conclusion

This case study looked at founder outreach at Heloix Startup Minds Pvt. Ltd. from the point of view of an Inside Sales Intern; the internship gave me a real task with real people on the other end of the call, to a significant degree. From this perspective, also, around six to seven founders agreed to take part in interviews.

The case is revealing that findings in outreach rely on much more than the number of calls, broadly speaking. In parallel with this, they hinge on research, a clear first conversation, timely follow-up and good data. At provide, much of this is learned individually by each intern, through the trial and discrepancy, broadly speaking.

A straightforward combination of a first-call framework, a follow-up rule with fixed dates, and a short weekly review can help future interns start faster and convert more of their conversations into the scheduled interviews; these phases do not need extra cost, and they keep the human side of outreach intact, to a significant degree.

For me personally, the internship sharpened my communication, patience, time management and professionalism, and gave me a closer look at how startups think about growth, and was a valuable first step towards my goal of building a career in business and, in the future, starting my own venture, on the whole.

20 Annexure

20.1 Annexure I – Founder outreach flow

Find Startup on Startup India Portal → Research Company and Founder → First Call, like Introduce, Explain Interview, Ask → Founder Interested? Advance 2-3 Time Slots → Send Calendar Invite and Reminder Email → Conduct Interview → Update Tracking Sheet

20.2 Annexure II – Suggested first-call outline

This is only an sketch to guide the conversation; it should be spoken in natural words, in many respects.

Table 5. Suggested first-call outline (Annexure II).

Step	What to cover
1. Who I am	Name, Heloix Startup Minds, internship programme
2. Why this startup	One line showing basic research on the company
3. The request	A short, free interview about the founder's journey, challenges and future plans

Step	What to cover
4. Time needed	Mention that it is short and can be scheduled at their convenience
5. Next step	Offer two or three time slots, or ask for a better time to call
6. Close	Thank them and confirm how the invite will be sent

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