

# Win your dream customers: How to Go-to-Market in the Nordics



### **Table of contents**

02	Outplay Your Competition: Your go-to-market strategy for the Nordics
04	Understanding the Nordics B2B market
04	Overview of the Nordic countries
05	Why B2B companies should consider the Nordics
07	Challenges entering the Nordic B2B market
09	Developing a go-to-market strategy for the Nordics
09	Identifying target B2B audiences and decision makers
10	Cultural nuances and navigating them in B2B sales
16	B2B outreach channels and tactics that work in the Nordics
18	Denmark
19	Sweden
21	Norway
24	Finland
25	Summary of best outreach practices
26	But what about social selling?
26	What to expect after outreach
29	Enter the Nordics with confidence in 3 steps
30	Resources

# Outplay Your Competition: Your Go-to-Market Strategy for the Nordics

### Outplay Your Competition: Your Go-to-Market Strategy for the Nordics

Jumping into new markets can be an exciting challenge for any company. A region known for its diverse beauty, the Nordics is also home to many different cultures and languages.

The region is becoming increasingly attractive for tech and startup innovation due to a solid digital ecosystem. Boasting some of the highest purchasing power globally, the Nordics is a market opportunity that international businesses can no longer ignore.

That sounds great, but figuring out the formula that works isn't easy.

Maybe you've already attempted to reach out to prospective customers in the Nordics but were unsuccessful. Did you contact prospects using the wrong outreach method in Finland? Are you struggling with the lengthy decision-making process in Sweden?

#### **BY THE WAY**

When you're done with this ebook, **you'll be equipped to reach out compliantly**, get the timing right for your outreach, and can be sure cultural differences won't hinder your success.

#### In this ebook, you'll learn:

- Why the Nordics is ideal for expanding your business
- Valuable outreach strategies to ensure compliance from the get-go
- How to navigate cultural differences for trust-building.

# **Understanding the Nordics B2B market**

#### **Understanding the Nordics B2B market**

#### **Overview of the Nordic countries**

The Nordics (sometimes interchangeably referred to as Scandinavia) consist of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.

In this ebook, we'll focus on Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. This region is one of the most sparsely populated regions in the world with **a total population of around 28 million**. But what is it about the Nordics that you should be interested in?



The Nordics (sometimes interchangeably referred to as Scandinavia) consist of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland.

#### Why B2B companies should consider the Nordics

Although sparsely populated, the Nordic countries are some of the world's wealthiest and are in the <u>top 20 globally when it comes to GDP</u>. The most important industries have been natural resources such as oil, gas, and hydropower from Norway, food industry products from Denmark, telecommunications from Finland, and iron and steel from Sweden.

#### Some quick facts about the Nordics:

Known for its innovation, the region has grown into a tech and startup powerhouse. They are also among the best countries to <u>put your data centers</u> in!

#### **JDID YOU KNOW?**

The Nordics have the highest number of unicorns per capita after Estonia and the USA!

# Emerging Industries Attractive for B2B 1 Fintech 1 Low corporate taxes 2 Cleantech 2 Solid digital infrastructure 3 Life sciences 3 Highly educated workforce

With everything this region has going for it, it's no wonder that many international organizations are looking to the Nordics as a place to expand their presence.

<sup>†</sup> Source: State of European Tech Report

It's also fairly easy to set up a business with **relatively low start capital** for a private LLC!

Company start-up costs	Private LLC	Public LLC
<b>■</b> Denmark	€5.000	€50.000
<b>■</b> Sweden	€4.000	€40.000
<b>₩</b> Norway	€3.700	€90.000
+ Finland	€75	€80.000

#### **NOTE**

If you're an **EU or EEA member**, you can start a company in any country within the Nordics.

If you are **outside the EU, EEA, or Switzerland**, you must apply for residence and a work permit.

#### **Challenges entering the Nordic B2B market**

With the good comes the not so good. **But** these issues shouldn't be huge barriers if you're prepared. Here are some areas you might stumble over:

#### 1 More competition

A side-effect of growth, the Nordics won't just be attractive to you, they will also be attractive to your competitors.

#### 2 Language barriers

While most of the Nordic countries are known for speaking English, it's all industry, location and education-level dependent.

#### 3 Complex labor laws

This is something you'll come up against if you're looking for local talent.

This all may seem a bit daunting, but that's what strategy and planning is all about!

So how exactly should you get started?

# Developing a go-to-market strategy for the Nordics

# Developing a go-to-market strategy for the Nordics

You can't just rent office space, put a sign up in front of your door and announce that you've arrived. Doing your research to develop your strategy is the crucial first step for your launch. But what should happen now?

#### Identifying target B2B audiences and decision makers

While you might be tempted to launch everywhere at once, one of the most important first steps when moving into new markets is to identify who you should be doing business with. Then, when you've found them, **go to where they are**.

#### Social business networks

A social business network like LinkedIn is basically a collection of potential customers. The information that's added will include things like their workplace and their position within the company. Great for compliant prospecting and outreach – but make sure to adhere to the platform's terms and conditions and any local outreach regulations that may apply.

#### **Trade fairs**

You could also visit some trade fairs and really get a personal impression of the B2B scene in your niche. The nature of trade fairs is already set up for communication, so people will be more willing to talk about the things you need to know.

#### A go-to-market platform

Using an Al-driven solution like <u>Dealfront</u> can help you quickly discover your future customers. Access fully GDPR-compliant, B2B contact data to generate high-quality leads.

#### **Localization and translation considerations**

We mentioned earlier that people in the Nordics are also known for being proficient in English, so do you necessarily need to speak the local language to be successful?

Here's what our Nordics experts have to say on the subject:

"You might find success booking meetings in English, but if you speak their language, your chances of a close will increase drastically."



**Robin Lidback**Country Sales Manager, Denmark

Also keep those tips in mind when you're planning your documentation and other customer-facing content. Having a great product brochure or educational blog post is only useful **when people are able to read them**.

Whether you hire an in-house translator or outsource to a translation agency, be sure to have this resource secured **before** you go live.

With language also comes the other cultural aspects. What are the people in the Nordics like in business?

"A local sales team can dramatically boost success and increase trust in your business."



**Markus Englin** Team Lead Platform Sales, Sweden + Finland

#### Cultural nuances and navigating them in B2B sales

You've now identified your target market, found a selection of decision makers, and given thought to your localization and translation strategy. Now it's time to leave the theory zone and enter the **actual doing business** zone.

Depending on where you're from, you may communicate more directly or rely on contextual information. Whether your communication style matches with that from the Nordics region is a huge consideration once you've made contact.

**Germans, the Swiss and Austrians are extremely low-context cultures.** They will give you information directly and precisely so there's no risk of miscommunication. That means they expect the same from you.

On the other side of the spectrum, the Japanese are on the extreme end of the high-context culture. It's considered rude to be direct so things will go unsaid to avoid conflicts. The concept of losing face is very common in high-context cultures.

#### "Don't rely on your company's ability to do business in English.

Even if Scandinavians generally have a good command of the language - it's very industry and education-level-dependent."



**Jesse Pärnänen,** Sr. Director New Business Sales, Nordics

The Nordics are on the low-context end of the spectrum, but not as extreme as the DACH region (Germany/Austria/Switzerland).

Experts use a scale to measure communication styles:

Low Context Cultures	High Context Cultures
Competitive	Not competitive
Task-oriented	Relationship-oriented
Individualistic	Team-oriented
Logical and rule-oriented	Rules are implied
Direct, explicit verbal communication is valued	Indirect, implicit communication is valued. The concept of "losing face" is common here.

#### Denmark

The Danes have a flat business culture with no need for formality. It's seen as unnecessary. They are also openminded about everything except people being late.



#### What else can you expect?

#### A fast decision making process.

One person tends to make decisions without needing to consult in a group.

#### Small talk is ok.

But get to the point quickly. Efficiency comes first!

#### A culture that values punctuality.

Show up to meetings and social events on time to win the trust of the Danes.

#### Sweden

If you're from a culture that enjoys small talk, Swedes can accommodate you more than their Nordic neighbours.

#### What else can you expect?

### Equality in decision making processes.

Swedes involve many people, even non-decision-makers! Getting an answer will require patience on your part.

#### **Relationship and trust-building**

In Sweden, people are more likely to do business with people they know, even if the product isn't a fit.

#### Not getting a no.

Swedes find it hard to say no directly, so it's not unheard of to be ghosted by them. Build trust to get around that.



#### Norway

Sweden's direct neighbor, Norway, is often said to have many things in common with them. But don't let that be where your research ends.

#### What else can you expect?

#### **Decision-making has more hierarchy**

Decisions tend to go to the big decision makers.

#### They need facts, not fluff

Don't build a personality around your product - just say what it does.

## Strict observance of their work-life balance

Office hours are exactly that so absolutely no contact after work.



#### **Finland**

You might be familiar with their sauna and weekend cottage culture; Finns love working hard as much as they love playing hard.

#### What else can you expect?

### They need you to come to meetings prepared.

Plus points if you send the agenda ahead of time.

#### No small talk? No problem!

Keeping the focus on the meeting agenda will win you plus points.

#### Real gender equality

They are very open to women in powerful roles and that's reflected in their business world.



You're now ready to make the next step on this go-to-market journey: reaching out. But don't just start picking up the phone or sending emails.

What are the regulations and expectations you have to navigate through to make contact?

#### **JOD YOU KNOW?**

Most people in **the Nordics take 4-5 weeks of vacation** between the months of July and August. Outreach and decision-making will have to be postponed until they're back!

# B2B outreach channels and tactics that work in the Nordics

# B2B outreach channels and tactics that work in the Nordics

#### ! DISCLAIMER

This document can serve as a helpful guide to understand data protection and e-privacy restrictions, but it's important to **note that this isn't legal advice**. After reading this post, if you require legal advice, we recommend that you consult a lawyer who can provide guidance and answers to any specific questions related to your case.

Both the **EU** (European Union) and **EEA** (the European Economic Authority) have strict laws and regulations in place that govern what you can do with personal data and how you can contact people by electronic means.

There are **two crucial pieces of legislation** that regulate how we can use personal data in the EU and the EEA:

- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- The e-Privacy Directive (PECD)

If you've never heard of the PECD, don't worry, you're not the only one. The PECD is often overshadowed by the far more famous GDPR. But it's worth getting to know it a little better as **it governs how you can reach out to people** for sales and marketing purposes.

While the GDPR is directly applicable in the EU, the PECD had to be implemented by national laws within each EU member state as well as the EEA. That means **each country has separate**, **slightly differing PECD laws** that govern how you reach out.

#### Let's break that down:

- The GDPR applies to most electronic marketing activities that may use personal data. For example, an email address which includes the recipient's name like john.smith@company.com.
- A country's respective PECD laws contain specific rules for electronic marketing, which (in most cases) also apply when no personal data is used for the outreach like *marketing@company.com*.

Under the GDPR, a lot of marketing or sales activities can be based on legitimate interest of the company doing the outreach in the marketing of their products or services, improving and promoting said products and services and growing their business (such interest is expressly referenced in recital 47 of the GDPR).

#### **WHAT IS LEGITIMATE INTEREST?**

Legitimate interest means a company can collect and process personal data if they have a legitimate reason to do so, and the individual's rights and freedoms do not override this legitimate interest.

A company is obliged to conduct a "legitimate interest balancing test" to weigh their interests against an individual's rights and freedoms. In short, a company must consider whether their reasons for processing an individual's information is more important than their right to privacy and protection of personal data.

#### Key outreach takeaways:

	Cold E-mails	Cold Calling
<b>■</b> Denmark	Opt-in only	Opt-in only
■ Sweden ■ Norway	Opt-in only	Yes, if:  Prospect isn't on a  do not call list
<b>+</b> Finland		

Be sure to get it right the first time or risk paying penalties!



The Danish Marketing Practices Act regulates all outreach activities within the country. Denmark also has something called the "Robinson List" that people can add themselves to. The list is where people can register themselves if they do not wish to be contacted under any circumstances regarding marketing/outreach.

As a company, **you are responsible** for checking that your prospect isn't on this list before reaching out.

#### **Exceptions to cold emailing without the prospect opting in first:**

- You've received the email address in connection with the sale of products and services. Additionally, further communication relates to marketing of the same products or services previously purchased from your business.
- You've informed the recipient of their right to opt out before the first outreach via email.
- The recipient did not opt-out.
- You've informed the recipient of their right to opt out in any marketing email received.

Generally speaking, **Danes prefer to be called over being emailed**. However, that's not a free pass to spam people with phone calls. Persistent and unwanted solicitation by telephone (aggressive commercial practice) or the use of an automated calling system (robocalls), is illegal and must be avoided.

#### **Regulations Overview**

Cold outreach via email (regardless of the recipent), or phone (to consumers/private numbers) is prohibited without prior consent.

#### **Outreach checklist**

- 1 Ensure your prospect has opted in or email if you've had previous business.
- 2 Check that your prospect isn't on the "Robinson List".
- 3 Is it clear to the prospect how they can opt out?



Swedes are open to receiving phone calls in a B2B context as long as your products and/or service are **directly relevant to their busines**s. Similar to Denmark, they have a list that people can add themselves to if they don't wish to be contacted.

<u>The Marketing Act</u> was established to, among other things, regulate cold email outreach. Similar to Denmark, cold emails aren't allowed without the prospect opting in first.

#### Sending direct emails to recipients without their consent is allowed if:

- You've received the email address concerning the sale of products and services.
   Additionally, further communication from you relates to the marketing of the same products or services previously purchased from your business.
- You've informed the recipient of their right to opt out before the first outreach via email.
- The recipient did not opt-out.
- You've informed the recipient of the right to opt out of any marketing email you've sent to them. Additionally, they're provided with a valid address where they can send an opt-out request.

## This means, you are only allowed to use emails received through previous business.

However, you *can* cold call unless the person has opted out by registering in the **Central Marketing Exclusion Register**. This list doesn't just cover outreach via telephone, but also email. Make sure that you've checked that the prospect isn't on the list before reaching out.

If you are calling a consumer, i.e. a natural person who is not primarily acting for commercial purposes, the following is prohibited:

- Calls on Saturdays, Sundays or other public holidays, and on working days before 09:00 and after 21:00.
- Use of a hidden telephone number or a telephone number that isn't registered or can't be found in telephone directories.



#### **Regulations Overview**

Cold outreach via email is prohibited without previous contact or consent. Calling using numbers from business registries is allowed.

#### **Outreach checklist**

- 1 Ensure your prospect has opted in or email if you've had previous business.
- 2 Check that your prospect isn't on the "Do not contact" list.
- 3 Give them a way to opt out of marketing activities.

In terms of calling, all business-related contact information is openly available on company registers. That means, **if a number is listed there**, **you're allowed to call it.** 

There is also a list that private individuals in Sweden can add themselves to if they don't want to be contacted for marketing purposes (the nix registry). Again, make sure that you've checked that the prospect isn't on the list before reaching out.

Next: Norway →



Although not part of the EU but the EEA, Norway has adopted the GDPR as well as their own PECD law, the <u>Marketing Control Act</u>. Similar to Denmark and Sweden, cold emails, both direct or mass mailing, aren't allowed.

#### **Regulations Overview**

As an EEA member, Norway integrated the EU's GDR into their regulations to comply with the rest of the EU.

#### **Outreach checklist**

- 1 Email is opt in only.
- 2 Cold calling is on an opt out basis.
- 3 Your business offerings have to align with those of your prospect.

However, there are again some exceptions.

Sending direct emails to recipients without their consent is allowed if:

- You've received the email address concerning the sale of products and services. Additionally, further communication from you relates to the marketing of the same products or services previously purchased from your business.
- You've informed the recipient of their right to opt out before the first outreach via email.
- The recipient did not opt-out.
- You've informed the recipient of the right to opt out of any marketing email you've sent to them. Additionally, they're provided with a valid address where they can send an opt-out request.

This means, you are only allowed to use emails received through **previous** business.



However, you can cold call unless the person has opted out by registering in the <u>Central Marketing Exclusion Register</u>. This list doesn't just cover outreach via telephone, but also email. Make sure that you've checked that the prospect isn't on the list **before** reaching out.

If you are calling a consumer, i.e. a natural person who is not primarily acting for commercial purposes, the following is prohibited:

- Calls on Saturdays, Sundays or other public holidays, and on working days before 09:00 and after 21:00.
- Use of a hidden telephone number or a telephone number that isn't registered or can't be found in telephone directories.

Next: Finland →



The Act on Electronic Communication Services regulates direct marketing by electronic means in Finland. Cold emails, both **direct or mass mailing**, to a natural person aren't allowed.

Sending direct emails to recipients without their consent is allowed if you've met the following criteria:

- You've received the email address concerning the sale of products and services. Additionally, further communication from you relates to the marketing of the same products or services previously purchased from your business.
- You've informed the recipient of their right to opt out before the first outreach via email.
- The recipient did not opt-out.
- You've informed the recipient of the right to opt out of any marketing email you've sent to them. Additionally, they're provided with a valid address where they can send an opt-out request.

You may, however, use email addresses of legal persons (businesses, i.e. non-personalised email addresses), unless they have opted out.

Calling a prospect in Finland is not prohibited *unless* they've added themselves to a do-not-call list.

#### **Regulations Overview**

You can only reach out via email with previous consent, and calling is allowed if the prospect isn't on an opt-out list.

#### **Outreach checklist**

- 1 Ensure your prospect has opted in or Email if you've had previous business.
- 2 Check that your prospect isn't on the "Do not contact" list.
- 3 Give them a way to opt out of marketing activities.



#### Summary of the best outreach practices

#### **Best practices for cold email:**

- john.smith@company.com: The prospect must opt in.
- marketing@company.com: You can cold email but you must comply if contact opts out.

#### **Best practices for cold calling:**

- Verify that the number isn't on a no-call list.
- Call only during office hours.
- Source numbers from official company registries.
- Outreach should be done in your prospect's language.

#### **General best practices:**

- Provide a transparent and quick way for contacts to opt out.
- Comply immediately with opt-out requests.

#### But what about social selling?

Whether the principles regarding cold outreach also apply to social selling is currently subject to debate. While in many cases, contacting prospects via social media platforms is not objected to, local regulations and case law are continually changing and in some instances may impose restrictions on "cold" outreach via social media platforms. Please make sure to keep local regulations and the terms and conditions of the social media platform you are using in mind when reaching out.

Also, please pay attention to what a recipient can typically accept. A business platform such as LinkedIn or Xing may be **more suitable for marketing or sales outreach** than other social networks that focus more on private interactions such as Facebook. The nature of these platforms is they're already set up for the B2B environment, so people won't be shocked or surprised when you connect with them. Attention should also be paid to the guidelines of the respective network, which often restrict social selling (e.g. to avoid spam).

Having a solid social selling strategy is something you can definitely add to your toolbox. And as always, a good rule of thumb-don't spam people.

#### What to expect after outreach

You've opened the cultural doors and found a way to reach out compliantly. Ideally, this all leads to you getting a closed deal with an enthusiastic new customer.

But don't forget that the onboarding process will also need some local talent.

#### Our Nordics expert, Jesse, explains why:

"When we close, the new customer is assigned their Customer Success Manager (CSM). Of course, you could also do it in English. Still, our experience has been that the customer prefers having a CSM that speaks their language. So the most successful formula is to have a local salesperson and, for the follow-up, a local CSM."



If you are sharing resources with your customer to create added value, note that the **people in this region prefer getting their information visually**. Like so many other places around the world, people have less and less time to consume information.

**Make it easy** for your customers to quickly get the answers to their questions, in the language they're most comfortable with.

# **Enter the Nordics with confidence in 3 steps**

#### **Enter the Nordics with confidence in 3 steps**

Throughout this ebook, you've learned about the Nordic countries, their business culture and how you can reach out compliantly.

#### Here are the three steps that sum up a sound go-to-market strategy:

#### 1. Do the research on your target market

- a. Where are your customers and how do they like to do business?
- b. Be aware of the challenges you might face.
- c. Which industries are currently growing?
- d. Be aware of all the necessary **regulations**.

#### 2. Start putting things in place

- a. Source and put a local team in place for outreach and customer service.
- b. Get your customer-facing resources translated into the target language.

#### 3. Compliant data sourcing, processing and outreach

- a. Use a go-to-market platform like <u>Dealfront</u> that provides fully compliant data for lead generation.
- b. Have a **data management hub** so your customers and prospects can easily decide how their data is processed and managed.
- c. Stay on top of any local regulatory changes to make sure you *remain* compliant.

The world of B2B is always changing. Creating a go-to-market strategy is vital, but you should also make sure that it can grow as you seek to move into new markets. A strategy that is easily adaptable will ensure that your business remains competitive and sustainable.

#### Now, over to you!

#### Resources

#### Information for all of the Nordics:

<u>Nordic Co-operation</u> - The website for the cooperation of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council.

#### **Statistics:**

Statista - Key economic indicators of the Nordic countries.

Statistics Norway - Full statistics for life in Norway.

#### Official ebooks and information services per country:

Suomi.fi - Information services for living and working in Finland.

Borger.dk - The official ebook to life in Denmark.

Norge.no - The gateway to digital public services.

Sweden.se - The official "Welcome to Sweden" website.

#### This ebook was brought to you by Dealfront

Dealfront is the go-to-market platform for Europe that gives businesses everything they need to win leads and close deals.

Dealfront's multilingual Al understands the nuances of European data, so it can access data and insights that other tools can't, all within Europe's complex compliance standards.

**Dealfront – The way to win deals in Europe.** 

#### Get in touch with us

**Contact Sales** 

+ 44 203 936 9081 sales@dealfront.com Book a demo Contact customer support

+ 44 20 3936 9083 support@dealfront.com Visit our help center General inquiries info@dealfront.com

