

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Value First, Every Time: How Lazar Mašić Lands E-com Clients With Cold Email

John Bejakovic interviews e-commerce copywriter and creative strategist Lazar Mašić about the research-heavy, spec-work-first outreach system behind his clients

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability. Filler words, false starts and repetition have been removed; the substance is unchanged.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

I'm here with Lazar Mašić, a copywriter who works primarily with e-com brands. When I sent an email to my list asking folks whether they do cold outreach, Lazar was one of the people who wrote back to say he does and that he's been having success with it. He specifically wrote: "I'm using cold outreach to get clients and I'm doing very well with it. Personally, it's one of the best methods, especially cold email outreach." We exchanged a few more emails, and I got very curious about what he does and the results he's gotten. So that's why we're here. Lazar, thank you for being here.

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Thank you for having me. I'm so excited.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Excellent. Based on what you told me, you're doing copywriting, mostly for e-com brands. But tell me more specifically: what kinds of services do you offer?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Because of the whole creative strategy hype right now, I'm mostly offering creative strategy work for e-com brands. But since my first focus was email marketing, I offer that too. Mostly creative strategy, though.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Got it. You said cold outreach is working well for you. Tell me about some of the brands you're working with. If you don't want to name names, that's perfectly fine — just give me a rough sketch.

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Right now I'm working with an e-commerce brand that sells makeup and beauty products for mature women. I got them through cold outreach, again after doing research on them, and I landed them after about five follow-ups. The second brand I'm working with right now sells fishing courses for anglers. I'm doing mostly email marketing for them.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

And that second brand also came from cold outreach?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Exactly.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Excellent. So how did you get started with cold outreach, and how long have you been doing it? Before these two clients, had you landed others through cold outreach?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

I had four more clients before, but they were from Serbia, my country — fitness trainers. That was much easier for me, because I used cold Instagram outreach. But after talking with some people, they told me I should start doing cold email and move to US- and UK-based clients. So I started, and it's been about two months now, and I'm having huge success, to my surprise.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

But even those four Serbian clients were basically cold outreach too — just a different medium, but the same approach, right?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Exactly, yes.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Now that you have these two clients, are you still actively doing cold outreach?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Yes, I'm always sending cold outreach. I'm always searching for new clients, because I never know when my work is going to end. I need to stay active so I always have someone in the pipeline. So even though I'm working with these two clients, I'm always searching for more people and more businesses.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Very cool. Let's start at the beginning, then. There are millions of businesses online. How do you decide who to go after?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

I have hard criteria. Since I offer creative strategy, I open the Facebook Ad Library and search for businesses that are already actively running Facebook ads. If a business doesn't have at least 10 to 15 active ads, I don't reach out to them. I've heard that might be a mistake, because maybe they just don't have someone who can run ads for them. But from my perspective, I'm not sure they'd have the money to invest in Facebook ads.

So I search for businesses with 10 or 15 active ads. I go through their ads and see how they're doing — what kinds of angles and ideas they're using. Then I look for things I can improve. If I can't improve on what they have — sometimes another agency is doing a better job than I would — I don't reach out. I grade every single business from one to ten before I start reaching out.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

So you're looking for someone in a sweet spot: already running ads, not a complete beginner, but not so advanced that you're not sure you could really help them.

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Exactly.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Got it. So you find a business like that. How do you decide who to contact, and what do you write to them?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

I usually use LinkedIn. I type the business name into LinkedIn's search bar, and I use a Chrome extension called ContactOut. I try to find the decision-makers — the people who are actually in charge and who I can talk to — and I try to find their email addresses. I list them all in a Google Sheet. Then I look them up on Instagram and Facebook so I can find some personal details I can use to personalize my outreach. Once I've decided who the right people are — usually one to three, depending on the business — I start crafting my emails and campaigns for each person.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

So you'd contact multiple people within the same company at the same time, rather than picking one person?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

I always pick multiple people, because I believe that if I give it multiple shots, I have a higher chance of winning that client and getting a sales call.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

You said you research them on LinkedIn and Instagram. Do you ever contact them through LinkedIn or Instagram, or is it always email?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

If I can't find their email address, then I'll use Instagram or LinkedIn. But I'm still new, and from what I've seen so far, I have a higher chance of getting a reply and getting on a call if I reach out by email. I can really personalize it, and I can write a long sales message that sells me and the service.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Give me an example of the kind of message you'd send. You find a brand, you find the person, you research them. What do you actually write?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Take the fishing business. I'm an angler myself. I found the guy, Ben. He's a spin angler, so he fishes with soft plastic lures, and I saw he uses similar lures to the ones I use. So my subject line was: "Ben, your shad is better than mine." In the email I open with "Hi Ben," and include a photo of myself with a fish, and then I introduce everything else. I always try to make at least two or three lines really personal, about me or about the person.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Nice. So that's how you open. What does the rest of the email look like? How do you make it clear that you're a copywriter and that you can help them?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

After I introduce myself and make that connection, I say something like, "But that's not the only reason I'm reaching out." For them, it was about their newsletter. I said something like, "I signed up for your newsletter about seven days ago, and I haven't received any emails since. No welcome flow, nothing." Then I list two or three benefits of having a welcome flow, a welcome email sequence. Then I say, "If you want to test my idea, here's a welcome flow I prepared for you," and I share it as a Google Doc. And then, of course, I wait for a reply.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

So you're giving them something right up front. You've done the work and you're demonstrating it, rather than just saying, "I'm a copywriter, let's get on a sales call."

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Every single time. Sometimes it's emails, sometimes it's a Facebook ad. It depends on the business and what I can improve for them.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Sure. So you write to Ben, you send him this nice thing, and you wait. What happens if Ben doesn't respond?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

I have criteria for that too. I don't like to wait more than seven days for a reply, but I also don't want to be annoying and disrespectful by emailing every day. So I usually wait two to three days before my next follow-up. And I always plan my follow-ups in advance. I have four to five follow-up emails prepared before I start following up.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Are the follow-ups templated, or are they also customized for the person and the offer?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

The first and second follow-ups are very personalized. I try to send more free value — for example, an explanation of the welcome flow I prepared, or even a second variation of it with different emails. From the third follow-up on, I start using templates. If you're reaching out to, say, 15 businesses a week, you can't always personalize. I sometimes play around with the templates, but most of the time it's templates.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Got it. In the case of Ben: you send him the thing, he likes it. Then what's the goal? Do you get on a sales call, a get-to-know-each-other call? Do you have a process after the emails, or do you try to close people directly by email?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

With every email, I try to get them on a discovery call of 10 to 15 minutes, so we can get to know each other and I can explain what I want to do for them. Then on the second call, which is the actual sales call, I have a whole presentation prepared, in Google Slides or something similar, where I explain my idea, how I'm going to do it for them, the whole process, and the price. That's my ultimate goal with every email I send.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

So you've got a two-step sales call process. I think that pretty much covers everything I wanted to ask. The one thing I'm wondering is, this sounds like a lot of work. You're doing a lot of research, and you're also doing client work. So, for example, this past week, how many emails are you sending?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

When I'm doing follow-ups, I can send 20 to 30 follow-up emails per day. But if I'm reaching out to a business for the first time, it's usually around 10 emails a day, because it's very exhausting. You have to find new information, prepare the free value, and then actually write the cold email, and that drains a lot of energy. So around 10 a day for new people, and 20 to 30 for follow-ups.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Wait, let me make sure. You said that's per day, not per week?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Per day.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Wow. So you're finding 10 companies a day, writing custom emails for them, preparing a sample for each one, and sending out 10 of these a day?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Almost every single day. But I really like copywriting. I like to write, I like to read, and I like to fish. A friend introduced me to all of this about two and a half years ago, and for those first two and a half years I was just learning copywriting. Only recently did I start really doing the work and reaching out to people. I've found a lot of fun in copywriting and working with real businesses. It gives me excitement. So it's not very hard for me.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

I think it's fantastic. I'm impressed with your work ethic and discipline, and with how systematic you are. You've really thought it through, and you're willing to do all of that personalization and work and demonstrate up front that you can help these people. Really nice stuff. I have a final question for you: how old are you? You look very young.

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

I'm 19. Tomorrow's actually my birthday.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

19. I'm incredibly impressed. There are so many people out there who study this stuff for ages and never do anything, or complain that there are no clients out there. You might have an advantage in having more energy than a lot of people. But I think a lot of people could follow the same process you're using and get results. I just want to say thanks for doing this. I'm sure you're going to be very successful.

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

I'd just add one small thing. I think most people say there are no clients and that it's hard because they don't actually have a system. If you're doing everything at random, it consumes your time and energy, and you're not prepared when someone actually replies. But if you have a system, and you track every single email, every follow-up, every reply, you know where you are, and it's very easy to take the next step. It's much easier to operate and succeed.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

That's a great point. Earlier on, when I needed clients, I tried doing cold outreach very similar to what you're doing. But it took me a long time — I was slower than you — and it's still a numbers game to some extent. It would get very frustrating, because if you put in a lot of work and don't get any kind of reply, you don't know where you went wrong, and it feels like you're out of control.

I've talked to a few other people besides you about cold outreach, and my conclusion is that cold outreach definitely works. You just have to believe that it works and keep at it, and, like you said, have a system you believe in. Lots of different approaches can work, but you have to know that they can work and trust in that. That's why I'm very grateful you shared your story. When people hear your story and the others I've done, I think they'll say, “Okay, this is real, and I can do it. I just have to stick with it for two weeks, a month, two months, and it'll start to work.”

Thank you very much. If people want to hire you, work with you or follow you, where's the best place to find you online?

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

My LinkedIn account. And my Instagram, even though it's nothing huge. That's mostly where people can find me.

JOHN BEJAKOVIC

Excellent. I'll get those links from you, and when I post these videos I'll include your contact details so anybody who wants to find you can. Thanks again. This has been great.

LAZAR MAŠIĆ

Thank you for having me. I'm so grateful for this.