

CANDIDATE OUTREACH TEMPLATES (2026)

The LinkedIn, email, and multi-touch sequences that earn replies – for passive candidates, active candidates, and executive search.

When LinkedIn capped Open InMail in late 2025, it didn't break outreach. It exposed what was already broken: volume. The firms still winning replies aren't sending more – they're sending **relevant** messages, timed to the right moment, through the right channel, personal enough to earn a single-word "yes."

Every template below is built to do that. Use them as a starting structure.

The three rules every message obeys

Short. 50–70 words on LinkedIn. A few sentences by email. If you need more room to make the case, the case isn't ready yet.

Specific. One genuine observation about their background, work, or trajectory. Not "I came across your profile" – that's what every other message says.

Low-friction. The ask should be answerable in one word. "Open to a brief call?" – not "I'd love to schedule a 30-minute discovery call to discuss this exciting opportunity!"

How to use these: Every [bracket] is a personalisation signal – the detail that tells a candidate a human looked at their profile before hitting send. That's the one thing you never automate. Replace it with something real, or don't send the message.

1. Passive candidates

70% of the workforce isn't looking – and for senior mandates it's closer to 90%. A message written for an active job seeker reads as noise to someone who isn't. Lead with the opportunity to think, not the role to fill.

LinkedIn (50–70 words)

Hi [First name] – I've followed [specific: the team you built at Company / your move into Category / your work on Project]. I'm not writing about a particular role. I work with [search firm] in [sector], and a couple of shifts are happening that I think are worth 15 minutes of your time – even if you're settled where you are. Open to a short call?

Email

Subject: A quick thought on [their world] / Your work on [specific]

Hi [First name],

[One specific observation – what actually caught your attention about their work.]

I lead [search type] at [firm], and a couple of shifts in [sector] made me think a short conversation could be worth your time – even if you're happy where you are.

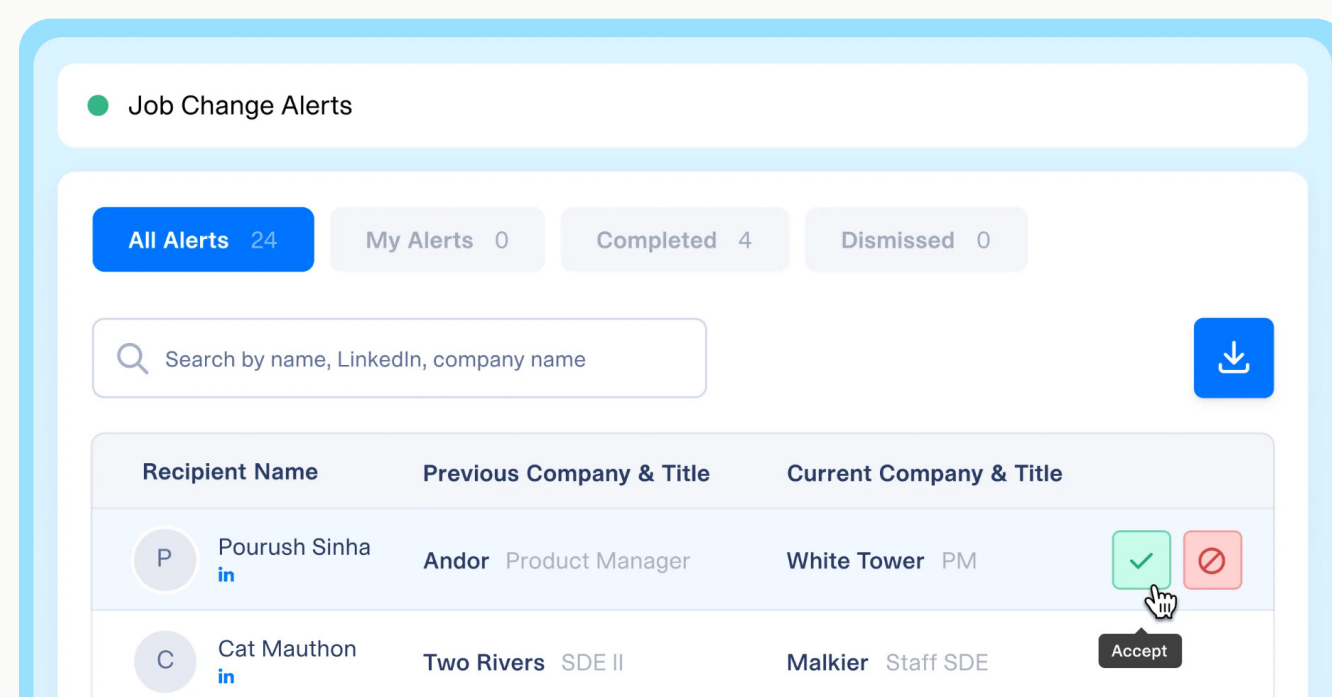
Would you be open to a brief call next week?

[Name]

Trigger-based (the highest-converting variant)

A promotion, a restructure, a funding event – these are the moments even deeply passive people briefly reconsider. Time your message to one and it stops being an interruption.

Hi [First name] – congratulations on [the move to Company / the promotion to Title]. [One genuine line on why it stood out.] Moments like this are often when the most interesting conversations happen. I work with [firm] in [sector] – would you be open to a quick call in the next couple of weeks?



Make this automatic: AIRA's Job Change Alert Agent monitors every contact in your CRM and flags the moment something changes – so the message above lands at the right moment without you watching for it manually. Firms using job change alerts cut time to first submittal by 34% and see 12% higher placements on average.

2. Active candidates

Here the candidate is already open – so the work is matching, not convincing. Stay specific, skip the full job description, and ask what *they* want before you pitch what you have.

LinkedIn (50–70 words)

Hi [First name] – saw [specific: your recent post / that you're open to conversations / your work on X]. I'm working a [search] in [sector] that lines up closely with [specific element of their background]. Rather than send a job spec, I'd rather hear what you're actually looking for next. Open to a brief call this week?

Email

Subject: [Their area] – a quick question

Hi [First name],

[Specific observation linking their background to the search.]

I'm running a search where your experience with [specific] is a strong match. Instead of sending the full brief, I'd rather start with what you're looking for next.

Open to a brief call this week?

[Name]

3. Executive search

At VP-and-above, the candidate is a peer, not a lead. The message is consultative, often confidential, and most useful when there's *no* immediate fit. Lead with their read on the market – interest follows from respect, not from a pitch.

Initial approach (LinkedIn or InMail)

[First name] – I lead [practice / sector] searches at [firm]. I've followed [specific: the turnaround at Company / the function you built / your board work with X]. I'm currently retained on a confidential mandate where your perspective would be valuable – whether or not it's the right move for you personally. Might you have 15 minutes in the coming weeks?

Email

Subject: A confidential conversation – [sector]

[First name],

[One precise, senior-level observation – P&L scale, a specific build, a board seat. Make it clear you've done the homework.]

I'm a [Partner / Principal] at [firm], retained on a confidential [sector] search. I'd value your read on the market as much as your own interest – these conversations are often most useful when there's no immediate fit.

Would a brief, off-the-record call work in the next two weeks?

[Name]

A note on language: With search firms, these are searches and mandates, not jobs or openings; you're a *consultant or Partner*, not a recruiter. The vocabulary signals you understand their world – get one word wrong and a senior candidate mentally checks out.

4. The multi-touch sequence

Single messages don't convert – it takes an average of **five touchpoints** to turn a prospect into a conversation, and multichannel sequences outperform single-channel by **287%**. Follow-ups alone lift reply rates by 50% or more, yet most recruiters send one message and stop.

Below is a five-touch, multi-channel cadence. The key is branching: connected contacts get a LinkedIn message, unconnected contacts get an email – each person routed to their highest-response channel automatically.

Touch 1 – Day 1 · LinkedIn connection request (or email if not connected)

[First name] – following your work on [specific]. Not writing about a specific role; I'd value a short conversation about [sector] when timing suits. Sending a connection either way.

Touch 2 – Day 3 · LinkedIn message if connected / email if not

Thanks for connecting, [First name]. [One specific observation.] A couple of shifts in [sector] make me think 15 minutes could be worth your time – even if you're not looking. Open to a brief call?

Touch 3 – Day 6 · Email (value, not another ask)

Hi [First name] – no pressure on a call. In case it's useful, [one genuine market insight / a relevant data point / something specific to their world]. Happy to talk whenever the timing's right.

Touch 4 – Day 9 · Phone / call task

(Surfaced as a task – a live conversation when the inbox is saturated. Reference the specific reason you reached out, keep it under two minutes.)

Touch 5 – Day 14 · Email (close the loop, leave the door open)

Hi [First name] – I'll stop here so I'm not crowding your inbox. If [sector] ever feels worth a conversation, my door's open. Wishing you well at [Company].

The architecture problem this solves: Most firms run sequences across two or three tools – a CRM, then Dripify or Lemlist for LinkedIn (\$79–\$87/user/month each), then email separately. They don't sync fast enough, so a candidate who replies by email still gets the LinkedIn step. Recruiterflow's Multi-Channel Sequences run email, LinkedIn, SMS, and call steps inside the same platform where you manage candidates – so a reply updates the record and **stops the sequence the moment it lands**. The branching above is native; no competitor does it. The result: 2.3x more responses than email-only.

What to automate – and what to protect

The question was never whether to automate outreach. It's what.

Automate the logistics: cadence, follow-up timing, channel sequencing, CRM logging, the first draft. These need consistency, which machines do better than people.

Protect the signal: the one specific detail that proves a human looked before hitting send. That's the difference between automated outreach that converts and automated outreach that gets ignored.

AIRA's Outreach Agent builds these sequences from your actual candidate history – so the message arrives personal without being written from scratch every time, and the cadence runs without a recruiter babysitting it. Right channel, right timing, right message. That's the whole game.

The firms winning placements in 2026 aren't sending more messages. They're sending the right one, at the right moment, to someone who's already in their database.

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