



SCRAPPOINT · WHITE PAPER

Why Your Sales Team Is Researching Instead of Selling

The economics of repetitive prospect research — the copy-paste loop, QA and rework, and what belongs to people vs. infrastructure.

For founders & operations leaders

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01

Executive Summary

~40%

of a rep's time is actual selling [S]

~16 hrs/wk

SDRs spend researching accounts [L]

15-20 min

research per single prospect [L]

The problem. The people you hired to sell, qualify, and run campaigns are spending most of their week on something else: finding and re-finding prospect data by hand. Across the industry, reps are actively selling only about 40% of the time [1], and the single largest non-selling drain is research. SDRs — the closest analogue to an agency's prospect researchers — spend roughly 37–40% of their time researching accounts, on the order of 16 hours a week [2]. The output of all those hours is a spreadsheet that starts decaying the moment it is saved.

Why it matters. For an agency, prospect research is not overhead attached to selling — it often is the product. But it is paid for as if it were free. Research time does not appear as a line item; it appears as slow turnaround, thin pipeline, missed campaigns, and senior people doing junior work. When a ten-person research function loses well over a third of its capacity to manual lookup, the agency is funding a full-time cost it never put on a budget.

Who is affected. Founders and MDs, because the cost lands on throughput and margin. You cannot take on the next client when your existing clients already consume every available research hour.

Key findings.

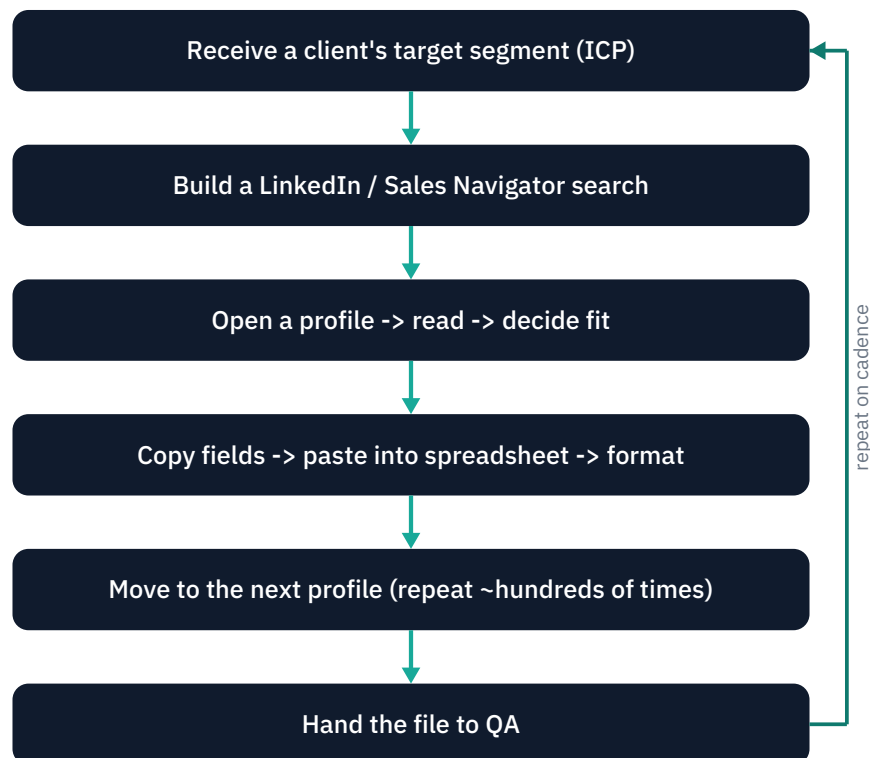
1. Manual prospect research is a 15–20 minute task repeated per prospect [2] — and it is repeated thousands of times a month.
2. The work is overwhelmingly repetitive: open profile, read, copy, paste, format, check. None of it requires the judgment you are paying for.
3. QA does not remove the cost; it adds a second human pass over the same records.
4. Rework is the most expensive hour in the operation because it is paid twice.

Recommended approach. Separate judgment from lookup. Keep humans on ICP definition, prioritization, messaging, and exceptions; move repetitive collection and formatting onto infrastructure that does it the same way every time.

02

Anatomy of a Research Analyst's Day

Watch where an agency researcher's day actually goes and a pattern emerges: the day is not one job, it is the same small job done hundreds of times.



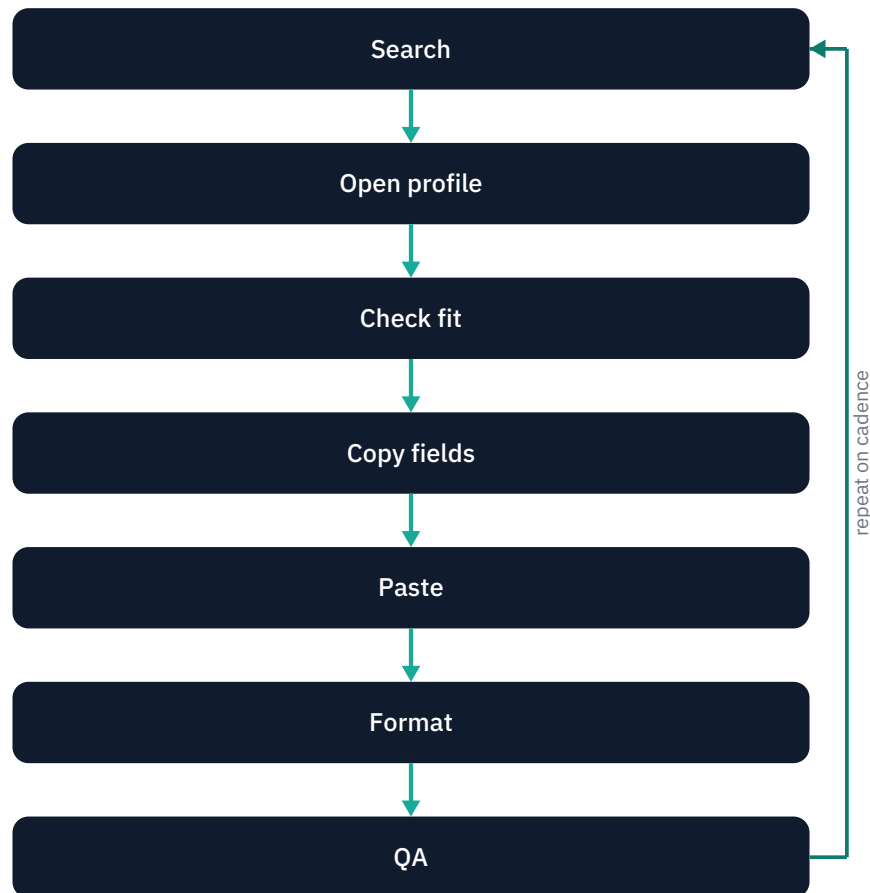
Industry benchmarks put per-prospect research at 15–20 minutes and the weekly research load at around 16 hours — roughly 37–40% of the working week [2]. A ten-person team can lose on the order of 148 of 400 weekly hours to research alone [2]. That is not a productivity leak at the margins; it is the dominant activity of the function, and almost none of it is the strategic work the role was scoped for.

The uncomfortable part: the senior researchers — the ones best at reading a profile and judging ICP fit — spend the same share of their day on copy-paste as the juniors. You are paying expert rates for clerical throughput.

03

The Manual Research Workflow

Decomposed into steps, the manual workflow is a loop of eight actions, and only two of them need a human brain:



Step	What the human does (manual)	Judgment required?
Search	Translate ICP into filters, run the search	Yes
Open profile	Click through result by result	No
Check fit	Read title, company, seniority; decide ICP relevance	Yes
Copy fields	Select and copy title, company, location, URL	No
Paste	Paste into the correct spreadsheet columns	No
Format	Fix casing, trim, standardize company/title strings	No
QA	Second person re-opens and re-checks the record	Partly
Repeat	Return to the result list, do it again	No

Six of the eight steps are mechanical. They are repetitive, rule-based, and identical across prospects — exactly the profile of work that infrastructure should own. The two that genuinely need a person

(interpreting the ICP, judging fit) are the ones that get squeezed when the clerical steps eat the day.

04 The Copy-Paste Problem

The copy-paste loop looks harmless at the single-record scale — a few seconds here, a reformat there. It becomes expensive through repetition and inconsistency.

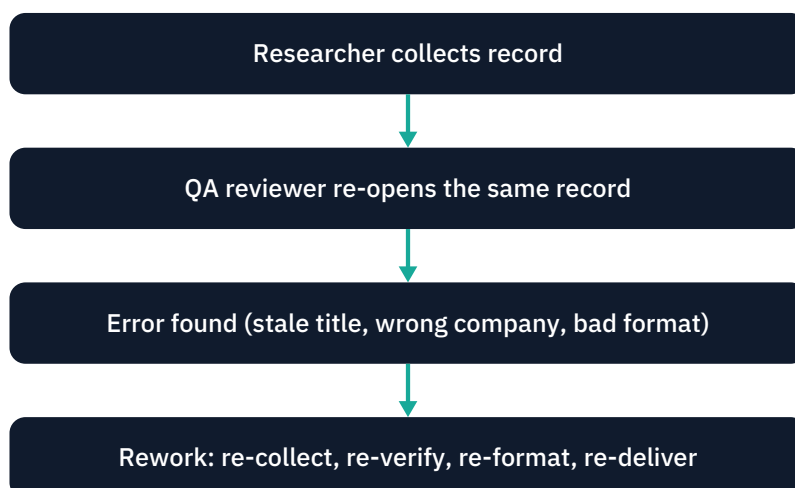
Repetition. At 15–20 minutes per prospect [2], a 2,000-record month is 500–650 hours of human attention before a single message is sent. That is the equivalent of three to four full-time people doing nothing but lookup.

Inconsistency. Because every researcher copies and formats by hand, the same company arrives as "Acme Inc.", "Acme, Inc", and "ACME"; the same role arrives as "VP Marketing", "Vice President Marketing", and "VP, Marketing". Downstream, those variants break deduplication, segmentation, and personalization — so the inconsistency created in this step generates rework in a later one.

No system of record. When the output is a flat file, there is no stable identifier tying a record to the person it describes. Re-collect the same segment next quarter and you produce duplicates instead of updates, because nothing keys the new row to the old one. The copy-paste loop does not just cost time now; it manufactures the data-quality problem you will pay to clean later.

05 QA and Rework

Most agencies respond to data-quality fear the only way a manual operation can: they add a second human. QA is a researcher re-opening records a researcher already collected.



This helps, but it does not change the economics — it doubles the human cost of every record while leaving the type of error untouched, because both passes are done by people subject to the same fatigue and the same ambiguity. QA reduces how often an error ships; it does not make the process produce fewer errors.

Rework is the most expensive activity in the whole operation, because every reworked record is paid for at least twice: once to create it, once to catch it, and often a third time to fix and re-deliver it. And rework is not random — it concentrates on exactly the fastest-decaying fields, like job title, which change often enough that a record correct at collection can be wrong by delivery [3].

06 The Research Cost Model

A useful way to think about the true cost of prospect research (Scrapoint's proposed model, not an industry standard):

Research cost = collection time + formatting time + QA time + rework time + management overhead

- **Collection time** — opening profiles and reading them, the unavoidable

per-prospect minutes.

- **Formatting time** — the clerical standardization that should never have been

manual.

- **QA time** — the second pass over the same records.
- **Rework time** — re-doing what shipped wrong, paid at 2–3x.
- **Management overhead** — coordinating people, files, versions, and formats.

Put the published benchmarks into the model and the picture is stark. With reps selling only ~40% of the time [1] and research consuming ~16 hours of an SDR's week [2], the majority of a research function's paid capacity is going to the first four lines above — and only the first line (collection) contains any judgment at all. The agency is spending expert salaries to buy clerical output, then spending again to check it.

07

Human vs. Automation: What Each Should Own

Automating prospect research does not mean removing people. It means putting people where judgment lives and infrastructure where repetition lives.

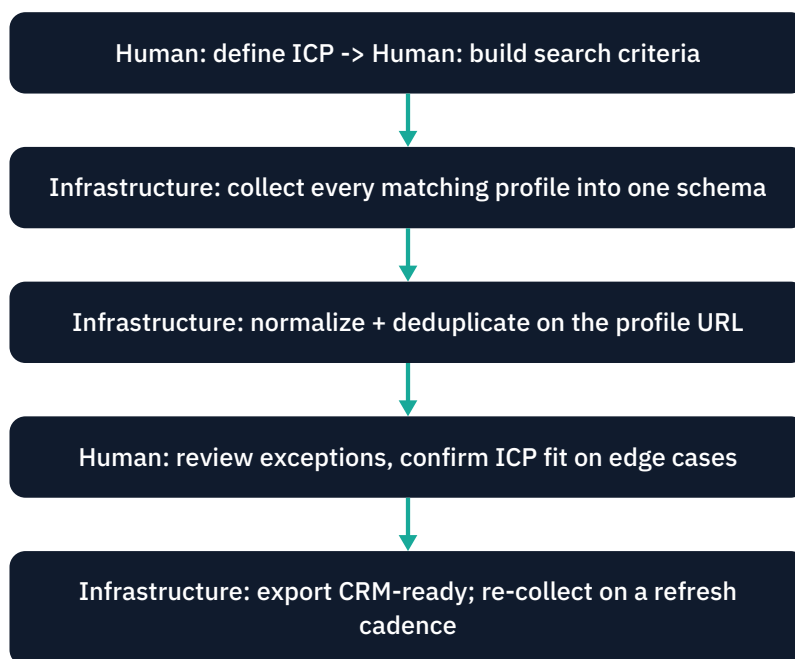
Keep human (judgment)	Move to infrastructure (repetition)
Interpreting the client's ICP	Opening every profile in a search
Designing search criteria & filters	Copying title, company, location, URL
Judging edge-case ICP fit	Pasting into a consistent schema
Messaging, positioning, campaign strategy	Standardizing company/title formatting
Handling exceptions and ambiguity	Deduplicating on a stable identifier
Client communication	Re-collecting the same segment for refresh

The test is simple: if the task is rule-based and identical across prospects, it belongs on infrastructure. If it requires reading a situation and deciding, it belongs to a person. The manual workflow fails because it forces your most expensive people to do the left column and the right column interchangeably, all day.

08

The Ideal Research Workflow

The redesigned workflow keeps the two human decisions at the front and the end, and lets a collection layer carry everything in between.



Notice what moved. The researcher no longer opens profiles one by one, copies fields, or hand-formats strings — the loop that consumed 16 hours a week [2]. The human time concentrates at the two ends of the process, where it compounds: better ICP definition and better exception handling improve every record, instead of being rationed out across thousands of clerical clicks.

This is also where consistency comes from. When collection and normalization run the same way every time, "VP Marketing" and "Vice President Marketing" resolve to one value automatically, and the same segment collected twice updates in place rather than duplicating.

09 Automation Opportunities

Not everything in research can or should be automated. The high-value targets are the repetitive, rule-based steps — the ones that generate both the time cost and the inconsistency.

- **Profile collection.** Opening and reading every result in a search is the single largest time sink; it is also fully rule-based once the search is built.
- **Field extraction.** Title, company, location, and the profile URL are the same fields on every record — mechanical to capture, error-prone by hand.
- **Normalization.** Standardizing company names, titles, and casing into one schema removes the variants that break dedupe and segmentation later.
- **Deduplication.** Keyed on the stable LinkedIn profile URL, so re-collection

updates rather than duplicates.

- **Data movement.** Getting records out of a scraping step and into a searchable

store and a CRM-ready export, without a manual copy-paste bridge.

- **Refresh.** Re-collecting known records on a cadence so the dataset stays in

sync with what LinkedIn currently shows [3].

What stays human: ICP strategy, search design, exception handling, messaging, and client judgment. The goal is not fewer people — it is people doing the work that actually needs them.

10 The Research-Time Calculator

The real cost here is selling time converted into data-entry time. You can quantify it, and quantify what moving the repetitive part to infrastructure would return.

Research cost per month = Reps x Research hours per week x 4.33 x Fully-loaded hourly cost

Selling time reclaimed = (Reclaimable share x Research hours) moved off reps

Variable	What it is	Benchmark
Research hours per week	Time a rep spends sourcing and enriching	~16 hrs (~40%) is commonly reported [L]
Fully-loaded hourly cost	Salary plus overhead, divided by working hours	Your payroll
Reclaimable share	The portion that is pure repetition (collection, formatting)	Your judgement — not 100%; ICP calls and exceptions stay human

11 Worked Example: A 10-Rep Team

Illustrative — assumptions stated; not a measured result or a Scrapoint benchmark.

Ten reps, each spending ~16 hours a week on research, at a fully-loaded \$30/hour.

Line item	Assumption	Value
Research hours	10 reps x 16 hrs x 4.33 weeks	~693 hrs/month
Research cost	x \$30/hr	~\$20,800/month
Repetitive collection (reclaimable)	50% of it	~\$10,400/month of selling time
Annualised reclaimable	x 12	~\$125,000/year

The reclaimed hours are not cash you bank. They are selling capacity you get back — your most expensive people doing the one part of the job only they can do.

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A 30 / 60 / 90-Day Plan

Window	Focus	Key actions	Outcome
Days 0–30	Measure	Time-study one week of rep research; split repetitive collection from judgement	Baseline hours and a reclaimable share
Days 31–60	Separate	Define the ICP as reusable searches; move collection and formatting off reps	A documented collection workflow
Days 61–90	Operate	Reps receive clean lists; QA becomes spot-checks; track selling hours recovered	Measurable selling time returned

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Scrapoint's Collection Role

Scrapoint is the collection + normalization + storage + refresh layer that lets you move the right column of Page 8 off your team's plate — factually:

- Collects public **LinkedIn and Sales Navigator** data (profiles, company pages, and lead/account searches) into **one normalized schema**.
- **Deduplicates** on the LinkedIn profile URL, so the same person is one record.

- Stores records in a searchable **Data Vault**; exports to **CSV / JSON / Excel**

(and via API) — CRM-ready, without a manual copy-paste bridge.

- Runs in the customer's ****own** environment, under their own LinkedIn session and IP**.

- **Re-collects for refresh**, keyed on the stable profile URL, so updates land in

place instead of creating duplicates.

What it does not do: find personal email addresses or phone numbers (a different tool category), or invent data a person never published. It keeps your dataset in sync with what LinkedIn currently shows — so your researchers spend their hours on ICP, judgment, and client outcomes instead of opening and copying profiles one by one.

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Next Step

If your researchers are spending the better part of their week opening profiles and copy-pasting fields, that time is recoverable. The work does not need less rigor — it needs the repetitive half of it moved onto infrastructure so your people can get back to the judgment you hired them for.

See how Scrapoint can own the collection layer, standardize every record, and keep it refreshed — so your team sells and strategizes instead of researching.

Book a demo · scrapoint.com/product · Start free with 1,000 credits

Sources

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