

COVID-19 Specific Slow Payer Telephone Script



smartAR developed this telephone script to successfully help professional service businesses negotiate faster payment with clients that have slipped outside the standard payment terms – possibly due to COVID-19. There are five key things to remember when making these calls:

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1. Clients outside your fixed credit terms are a **problem** to be addressed. Your cash flow depends upon you being paid.
2. Solving this problem is a **today** issue. You must not avoid the call (though some creditors will) – but, please be empathetic.
3. You need to have plenty of **options** to help resolve this problem. smartAR fee funding will help many of your clients, so use it.
4. You need to be in **control** – not the client. You have done the work, you deserve (and need) to be paid.
5. Be **prepared** before making calls e.g. Have your prior notes, credit card facility and fee funding quick quote calculator ready. for

What to say	Why to say this	Common objections or promises
<p>Good Morning...</p> <p>My name is, calling from the credit control division of [name of your firm], how are you today?</p> <p>[If you have sent a letter previously] Do you recall receiving a letter/email from us recently?</p> <p>[If no prior letter/email] Do you recall the work we did for you recently? (whatever they say)</p> <p>That's fine, the reason I'm calling is because your account with us has fallen beyond our fixed credit terms of ... days. This is a courtesy call to sort this out and let you know the available payment options:</p> <p>(Do not pause, just go through your main options.)</p> <p>- You can either direct credit our account <u>today</u>; or - I can take your credit card details <u>now</u>; or - We can arrange an instalment plan <u>now</u> to spread the payments over either six or 12 months,</p> <p>Which option would you prefer to use? (PAUSE – say nothing!) see notes =></p> <p>- Direct Credit – OK, that's fine, let me give you details of our account. I'll keep an eye open for the deposit this afternoon. - Credit Card – OK, that's fine, let me get your details now. - Pay by instalment – OK, that's fine. I'll get the paperwork to you today by email. Would you prefer the payments to start tomorrow or the next day?</p> <p>Thank you for helping us tidy up the account. Is there anything else we can do for you?</p> <p>Goodbye.</p>	<p>We strongly recommend that a team member <u>other than a Director/Manager/person</u> who works with the client make the call. Delegate or outsource.</p> <p>Use the clients name, it makes the call less officious and ask how they are - <u>warmly</u>. The part of the brain working in 'here and now' has to turn off when you ask somebody to remember something. This means you will have <u>the client's undivided attention</u>.</p> <p>Don't mention COVID-19 – it might not be an issue for them at all. If these telephone calls are made early this is a friendly customer service call around a <u>small problem</u> that can be solved. Also, this reinforces that <u>the credit terms are FIXED</u>.</p> <p>List all the options available with your firm and be <u>sure to include the words 'today' or 'now'</u> (without particular emphasis) to retain the implied immediacy of the problem/solution.</p> <p>(The power of the pause!) This silence may go on for some time. Try not to be the one who breaks it – if you must, say only:</p> <p><u>'Would you like me to repeat the options?'</u></p> <p>Clients will either confirm or ask a question about an option. It is safe to assume that <u>whichever option they mention is what they want to do</u>.</p> <p>Generally, answer any direct questions relating to the payment option with some alternatives (e.g. Would you rather use Visa or MasterCard?) then proceed to implement it.</p>	<p>Look - I'm very busy now can I call you back tomorrow? Yes, I understand you are very busy, so I guarantee I'll not waste a moment of your time. The reason I'm calling is ... per original script.</p> <p>Gosh, I'm very sorry, I'll transfer the money today. Thank you very much for helping us solve this problem today. If you do that now, I will check the bank account towards the end of the day and confirm receipt back to you. Thanks for your help.</p> <p>I'm really struggling to pay given the COVID -19 downturn. (Be empathetic and kind) We completely understand. It's incredibly tough at the moment. Under these circumstances what we offer is the option to finance the fee over a three, six- or twelve-month periods. Which of those do you feel will fit your cash flow best?</p> <p>I'm just waiting for (GST refund, big client to pay them, whatever excuse) and I'll pay you then. Thank you for understanding our problem. What we do in these circumstances is arrange to fund the fee until you get [refund, paid ..whatever]. This will help your cash flow and there is no penalty if you repay the finance early when you get paid later. Would you prefer to spread the fee over three, six or 12 months?</p> <p>Let me think about it and I'll get back to you. That's fine, with so many options it is sometimes difficult to choose. Just to clarify, since you are outside our credit terms, we need a direct credit or credit card payment or if you prefer, we can arrange a monthly payment option starting next week. Which would suit your cash flow best?</p> <p>Golden Tip: To stay <u>in control</u> always use this phrase when addressing an objection to payment: "I completely understand – given those circumstances what we do is ... (insert your preferred solution)"</p>

Too busy or too many clients to call yourself? Ask about smartAR Outsourced Ledger Management service.