

everlytic
Smart Communication Software

2026 EMAIL INSIGHTS REPORT

You've Got M(AI)L

Can we still trust our inbox?

What the best-performing emails in 2026 teach us about earning attention and trust in an AI-shaped inbox.

An Everlytic and BreadCrumbs Linguistics research partnership

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1 Research Partnership

This insights report has been compiled as part of an Everlytic and BreadCrumbs Linguistics research partnership.

Everlytic

Everlytic helps South Africa's top companies reach more customers and drive the results that matter - repeat purchases, higher engagement, and audiences that stay loyal over time. One platform covers email, SMS, voice broadcasting, and web push notifications, with tracking and analytics that show you exactly what's working and where to improve.

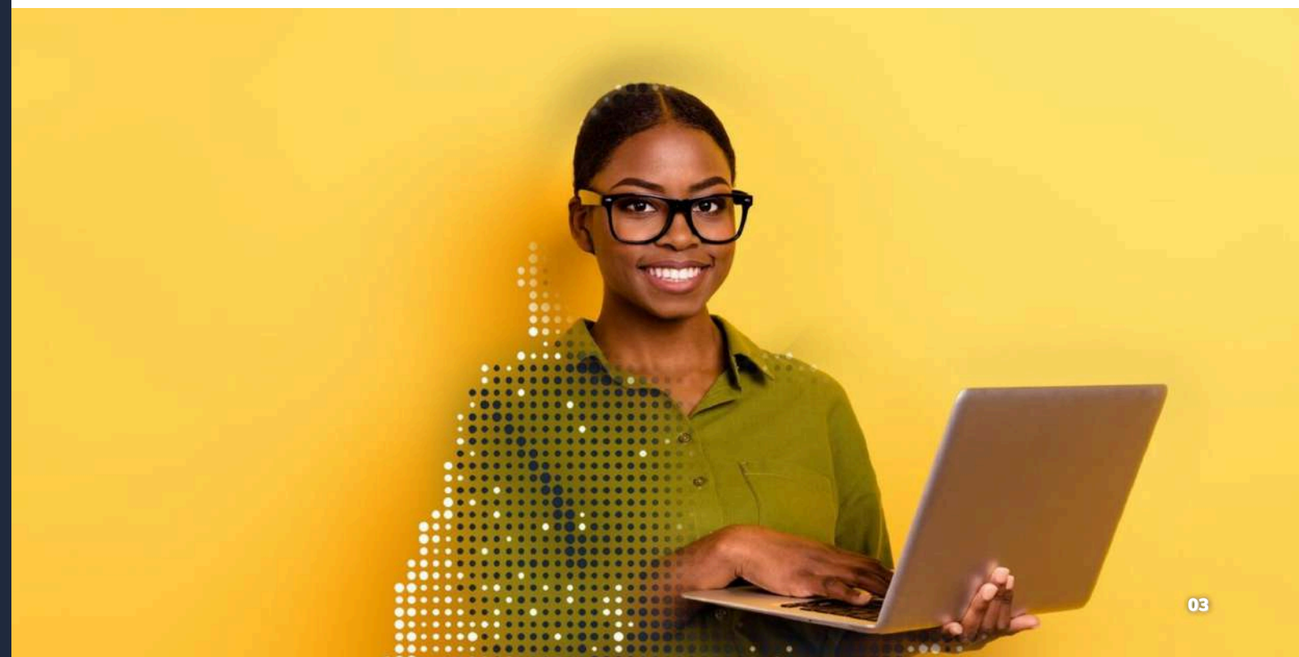
Everlytic provides a communication backbone for businesses to stay connected with the people across their networks. And with AI Studio, you can extend your reach to WhatsApp. Trusted by some of the country's biggest brands, Everlytic handles billions of sends every year.

BreadCrumbs Linguistics

BreadCrumbs is an award-winning behavioural communications firm specialising in Behavioural Linguistics™ – applying behavioural science to communication.

Using human insights and their own AI platform, BreadCrumbs brAIn, the firm builds behavioural economics into marketing to help brands stand out, connect with their audiences and nudge successful action.

In a world competing for attention, how businesses communicate matters. BreadCrumbs helps make messages easier to notice, understand and act on – from marketing campaigns and customer communication to digital experiences.



2 Executive Summary

Email is woven into the everyday workings of business. It confirms a purchase, welcomes a new customer, and delivers information someone needs to take their next step. Across a business's wider network, these messages help people stay informed and keep relationships moving.

You want the person reading your email to understand something. To do something. How clearly you communicate can shape that, and how they feel about your organisation. This makes the quality of email communication a business concern that extends well beyond the marketing team.

For businesses that communicate at scale, the challenge is to preserve that sense of connection across every send. Everlytic provides the platform that supports those ongoing relationships. How businesses use language and design determines what the person receiving each message understands and takes from it.

It becomes harder as inboxes fill up. Artificial intelligence (AI) makes it easier to produce more content, while inbox tools increasingly sort and summarise messages before people read them. To earn attention means we must understand what your reader needs and make it clear why your message matters.

So, what cuts through a crowded inbox?

To find out, Everlytic and BreadCrumbs Linguistics analysed the **top 5% of our best performing emails** sent through the Everlytic platform from January to June 2026.

The data was pulled from **1.2 billion emails** that were sent during the year, across 18 industries representing **a total of 930 brands**. Email ranking was done according to key engagement metrics, including open rates and click-through rates.

Top 5%
of best performing emails analysed

1.2 billion
emails sent through the platform

18
industries in the dataset

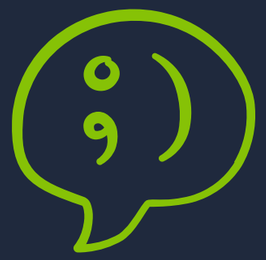
9
industries among the top performers

The top-performing mailers represent these nine different industries:

- E-commerce
- Medical & Healthcare
- Publishing & Media
- Business & Consulting Services
- Financial Institutions
- Education & Training
- Governmental Organisations
- Agencies & Marketing
- Lifestyle, Arts & Entertainment

The strongest emails made the value easy to spot: they put the reader at the centre, they used short, conversational sentences, they gave people a clear next step, they used timing without manufacturing pressure, and they looked and sounded recognisably human.

> **AI is not a threat to content marketing but a powerful tool that, when used thoughtfully, can enhance human creativity and strategic capabilities. The most successful marketers will be those who learn to seamlessly integrate AI technologies while maintaining the irreplaceable human touch.**
>
> **Angeley Mullins, Forbes Business Development Council**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings

1

Put the reader at the heart of the message

63% of the analysed subject line and preheader pairs used “you” or “your”. Reader-focused and ownership language was one of the clearest patterns among the top-performing emails.

2

Make the value obvious

Half of all subject lines included an explicit value, reward, or benefit cue. These emails averaged 79.2% opens compared with 74.4% for the rest.

3

Make the next step clear

Action-led subject lines with words like “claim”, “unlock”, “activate”, and “discover” averaged 79.8% opens, compared with 73% in the remainder.

4

Create urgency without the panic

Timely words such as “now”, “today”, and “live” appeared regularly, but not one of the top-performing emails used “hurry”, “urgent” or “last chance”. The strongest emails gave people a reason to act without pressuring them to.

5

Timing matters, too

Wednesday was the most common send day among the top-performing emails, accounting for 36.7% of the sample. The most common send times were 8-9am and 10-11am, each accounting for 23.3%.

6

Sound (and look) human

The top-performing emails used conversational language, familiar senders, and authentic, brand-specific imagery. In an inbox increasingly shaped by AI, recognisable human and brand cues stood out as a crucial feature.

3 The Battle for Attention

Globally, an estimated 376 billion emails were sent and received every day in 2025. If that already sounds like a lot for our inboxes to handle, the number is projected to keep growing.

According to Forbes, **72% of brands rank email as their most effective marketing channel**. And its value goes beyond getting people to click or buy. Email gives brands space to educate and inspire, while still supporting the call to action.

An inbox brings different parts of someone’s life together. A message from their bank sits alongside an employer update, a purchase confirmation, and an offer from a retailer. Your reader moves between these relationships throughout the day, with different expectations for each one.

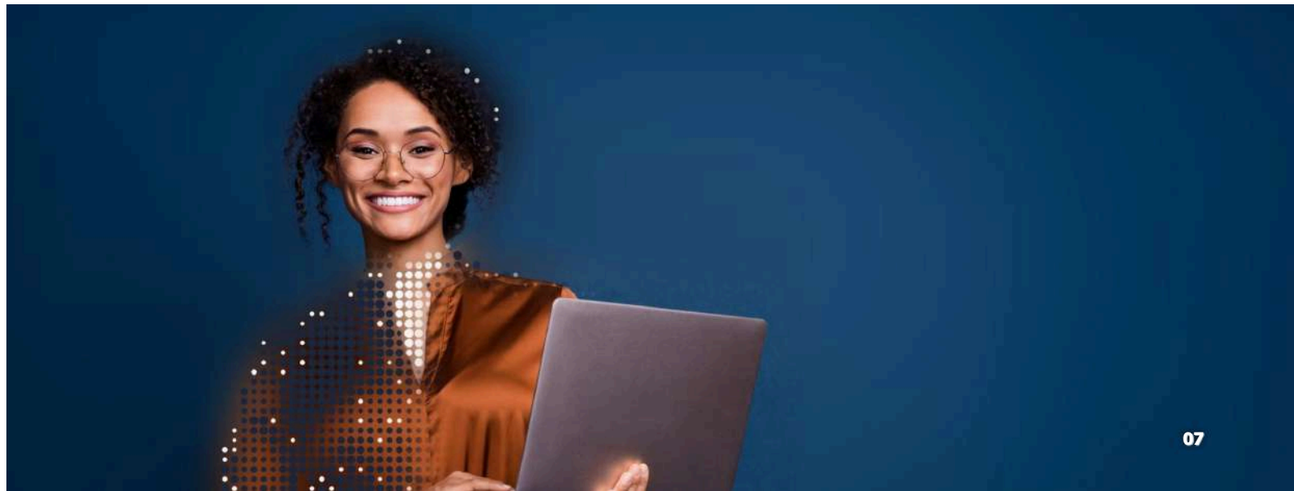
That is the environment your email enters.

Email isn’t going anywhere

However, as the volume grows, so does the competition for attention. Your email competes with many others, all asking to be opened, read, remembered, and acted on.

And our attention has limits. Behaviourally, we have a finite amount of mental energy to spend each day. Every decision and action draws from this. So, when we tackle an overflowing inbox, we’re selective about what deserves our time. And even more selective about what deserves our action.

It’s easy to get an email into someone’s inbox. The not-so-easy part is to make your email easy to notice, simple to understand, and intuitive to act on.



THE BATTLE FOR ATTENTION

Global email usage statistics

376 billion

emails are sent and received worldwide every day (2025 estimate).

93%

of email users check their emails daily.

42%

check their inboxes three to five times a day.

61%

of consumers spend eight seconds or more viewing an email.

41%

of email views come from mobile devices.

3 times

more likely to make purchases from email marketing than social media.

80%

of people are more likely to make a purchase from a personalised email.

R650

Estimated revenue generated globally for every R18 spent on email marketing.

Source: The Radicati Group, Email Statistics Report, 2024-2028 (via Statista).

> **Email is where the conversation with a brand begins, and where lasting connections are built. Every message must earn its place in the inbox. At Everlytic, we help brands put every message to work.**

Katlego Nake, Senior Head of Growth Marketing, Everlytic

4 Trust as the New Currency

As AI makes it easier to create and personalise content at scale, customer communications marked by true authenticity increase in value.

When language starts to sound generic or formulaic, we question whether there's a real human behind the message. This puts more pressure on brands to make every message feel credible, relevant, and distinctively their own.

When an email lands in the inbox, readers ask:

- *Is this relevant to me?*
- *Is it worth my time?*
- *Does it sound like the brand I know?*
- *Is the message genuine?*

The language and design of an email helps people answer those questions.

A recognisable voice, trustworthy information, valuable offers, and communication that feels consistent with the brand all provide signals that a message deserves attention.

The signals of trust

- **A recognisable voice**
- **Trustworthy information**
- **Valuable offers**
- **Brand consistency**

TRUST AS THE NEW CURRENCY

This is where Behavioural Linguistics gives us a useful lens. It looks at communication across five areas:

Semantics: Words

What the brand says through vocabulary choice, wording, and word frequency.

Syntax: Grammar

How we structure what we say through sentence length, tense, and grammatical choices.

Phonetics: Sounds

How language sounds. This includes devices such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and repetition. These can affect attention, fluency, and memorability.

Visuals: Imagery

The visual language surrounding the words; fonts, colours, GIFs, icons, emojis, and imagery.

Heuristics: Biases

The mental shortcuts and behavioural biases people use when making decisions.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

Trust is not created by saying “trust us”. It is built through the signals that surround the message. Clear wording, helpful information, familiar brand cues, and honest offers all make it easier for people to understand who is speaking, what is being offered, and whether it deserves their attention.

5 Research Methodology

This report set out to answer a simple question:

> **What can high-performing emails teach us about email engagement?**

Some key stats

Top 5%
of best performing emails were analysed

18
industries in the database

1.2 billion+
emails sent from January to June in 2026

Here’s what was analysed

We wanted to understand what worked best for email engagement across the dataset, regardless of industry, brand, or topic. Email performance was assessed using key engagement metrics, including open rate and click-through rate.

For this study, we used **open rates** to identify the top-performing emails, and then considered **click-through rates** alongside them to build a more complete picture of performance.

While opens help us explore what gets an email noticed, clicks provide a stronger behavioural signal. They show us someone has taken the next step and interacted with the content. Looking at both metrics helps us distinguish between emails that attract attention, and those that encourage action.

To ensure the results were based on sufficiently sized audiences, emails sent to fewer than 100 recipients were excluded from the dataset.

Opens show what gets noticed. Clicks show what gets acted on.

Open Rate

Email open rate is the percentage of people who open a specific email out of the total number of people who you sent the email to. This is calculated by taking the number of people who open the email and dividing it by the number of emails sent that did not bounce (i.e. failed to reach the recipient). This number is then multiplied by 100 to arrive at the email open rate percentage.

Click-Through Rate

A click-through rate (CTR) for email is the percentage of people who clicked on at least one link in an email message. This is calculated by dividing the total number of people who clicked by the number of delivered emails, and multiplying that ratio by 100.

The latest Everlytic Email Marketing Benchmarks Report shows:

Open rate

29.28%
Average

76.82%
Top mailers in this report

Click-through rate

3.53%
Average

14.08%
Top mailers in this report

These mailers were then put under the microscope and analysed using two lenses:

1. **Quantitative analysis** looked for measurable patterns. These included word frequencies, subject-line characteristics, readability, personalisation, and other linguistic features.

2. **Qualitative analysis** looked at how language and visual communication were used to attract attention, communicate value and encourage action.

Together, these allowed us to identify recurring patterns among the emails that performed particularly well.

6 Language Insights

An analysis of the language across the dataset helped us to better understand what patterns the emails had in common.

So, what does the language of a high-performing email look like?

We've bucketed these into 6 main themes.

a)
Make it mine

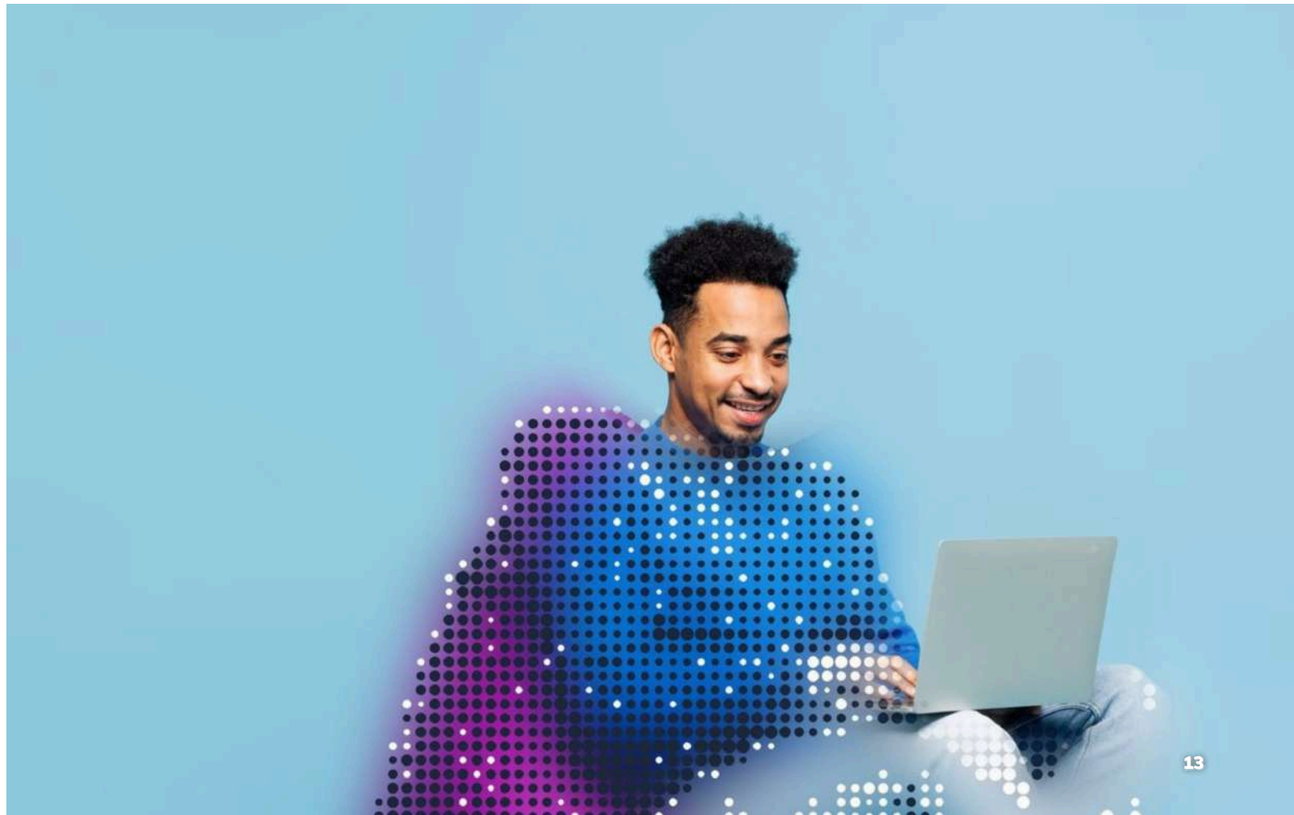
b)
Talk human to me

c)
Clear beats clever

d)
Right time, not rush time

e)
Familiarity breeds clicks

f)
Worth a thousand words



a Make it mine

The 15 most frequently used words are shown below. This is a useful lens to see what stands out most and unravel themes and patterns across multiple texts.

By analysing word frequencies across the dataset, we identified the recurring use of:

1 your/you	2 with	3 we/our	4 voucher	5 apply
6 team	7 more	8 all	9 get	10 only
11 need	12 deals	13 rewards	14 receive	15 free

63%

of the subject line and preheader pairs use “you” or “your”

One of the clearest patterns in the top-performing emails is **ownership language**. This is where the reader is at the centre, rather than the brand. The word analysis shows “your/you” as the most prominent term.

This places the brand’s product, benefit, or outcome directly into the reader’s world:

- ***“Your item*”***
- ***“Your gift”***
- ***“Your product*”***
- ***“Your next big move”***
- ***“Your details”***
- ***“Your full potential”***

**NOTE: Removed specific item reference for brand anonymity.*

What’s interesting in this sample is that the same approach extends beyond rewards. These brands used ownership language around products, opportunities, and outcomes too.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

Previous behavioural research points to the **Endowment Effect**: our tendency to value something more once we feel it belongs to us. Framing a reward as already “yours” can create that sense of ownership before it’s even claimed.

b Talk human to me

The strongest emails don’t all sound the same. Many contain small cues that make the language feel spoken rather than manufactured.

50%
of the subject line and preheader pairs use an exclamation mark

27%
use an emoji

23%
use a contraction

This is considered more **conversational language**, which can help create a connection with your reader.

40%

of top-performing subject lines contained a name field

Personalisation plays a role too: 40% of top-performing subject lines contained a name field, and had an average open rate of 79.5% compared with 75.0% for those without one.



Importantly, the lesson isn’t to sprinkle every email with emojis, exclamation marks, and first names. Rather, it’s to write with the natural warmth, specificity, and rhythm of one person speaking to another person – without manufacturing intimacy.



<From>: Who is the sender?

Who a message comes from can shape how we respond to it. This is known as the **Messenger Effect**. We don't judge information on the words alone. The sender also gives us clues about whether something feels credible, relevant, or worth our attention.

The same message may land differently when it comes from:

- an expert with relevant authority
- someone we know or trust
- a person we identify with
- a recognised organisation or figure

Examples from the top-performing mailers include:

From: ***Your bestie, <name>***

From: ***Your brand manager***

From: ***<First name>***

From: ***Handwritten signature***

The sender is part of the message.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

In email communication, who delivers the message can matter as much as what it says. Choose a messenger that the reader recognises and trusts to make the message feel more credible and relevant. Small linguistic cues that reflect how that person naturally speaks can also make brand communication feel more human – and less AI-generated.

C Clear beats clever

The top-performing emails repeatedly reduce the amount of work required to understand two things:

What do I get? ***What do I do?***

Clarity makes an email easier to read – and easier to trust. When people must work through jargon, vague promises, or unnecessary information, they are left to do the heavy lifting. The strongest emails in this dataset did the opposite; they made the value and the next step clear from the start.

50%

of subject lines contained an explicit value, reward, or benefit cue

These emails averaged **79.2% opens** compared with 74.4% for the rest.



The value is often highly specific:

Inbox What the reader sees first

Top-performing mailer
"Claim R250 In Exclusive Savings!"

Top-performing mailer
"Unlock R150"

Top-performing mailer
"A warm welcome and 25% off!"

These all tell readers what they stand to gain before they even open the email.

Almost one in four subject lines (23%) state a monetary or percentage value directly. This makes the benefit concrete instead of leaving the reader to work it out.

The same pattern appears in the action language.

The majority of subject lines had a strong action-led opening. They used words such as “Claim”, “Unlock”, “Activate”, “Discover”, and “Lock in”. These emails averaged approximately **79.8% opens**, compared with 73.0% among the remainder.

Claim **Unlock** **Activate** **Discover** **Lock in**

These direct-action cues give the call-to-action more energy, and make the next step immediately clear.

In a busy inbox, every extra word competes for attention.

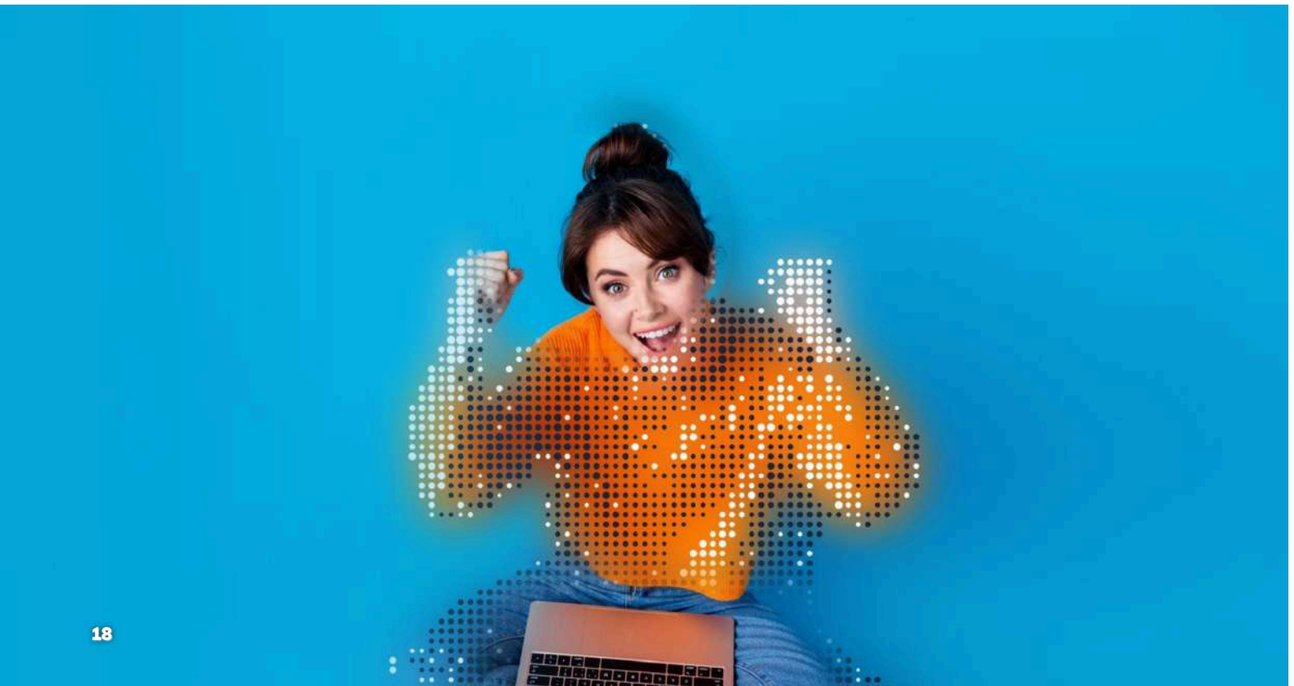
The top-performing emails keep things short, with subject lines averaging just nine words, while preheaders averaged six.

9 words
average subject line length

6 words
average preheader length

This brevity matters for three reasons.

- First, fewer words mean less for the reader to process. It makes the main message quicker to understand at a glance.
- Second, shorter subject lines and preheaders are more likely to appear in full in the inbox, rather than being cut off with an ellipsis.
- Third, clear subject lines and preheaders help AI tools quickly identify what an email is about and why it matters when sorting and summarising messages.



Reading, made easier

We also analysed the top-performing mailers using the **Flesch Reading Ease score**. This measures readability based on sentence and word length. The higher the score, the easier the text is to read and understand.

The top five mailers all fall into the **Standard/Fairly Easy** reading range. This means they are generally pitched for a broad audience – roughly at the **12–14 age reading level**.

To improve a mailer’s **Flesch Reading Ease score**, focus on two things: **shorter sentences and shorter words**. The score increases when you:

- **Shorten sentences** – break long sentences into smaller, clearer ones.
- **Use simpler words** – choose words with fewer syllables where possible.
- **Cut unnecessary words** – remove filler and repetition.
- **Avoid jargon** – replace technical terms with everyday language.
- **Keep one main idea per sentence** – make the message easier to follow.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

Don’t make people hunt for the point. Put the value where they can see it, make the action obvious, and remove anything that makes the reader work harder than they need to.

Right time, not rush time

Urgency still has a place in high-performing emails. But, in this dataset, it comes across less like pressure and more like useful timing.

Across the top-performing mailers, “now” appears in 20% of subject line and preheader pairs, “live” in 13%, and “today” and “loading” in 10% each. “Reminder” and “don’t forget” also appear.

20%
“now”

13%
“live”

10%
“today”

10%
“loading”

What we see

“now” “live” “today” “loading” “reminder” “don’t forget”

Useful timing that tells people why the message matters now.

What we don’t see

~~“hurry”~~ ~~“urgent”~~ ~~“last chance”~~

What we don’t see is just as interesting: there is no “hurry”, “urgent” or “last chance”.

Instead, the language gives people timely information they can use. “It’s time to…”, “before anyone else”, “is on the way” and “are loading” create a sense of immediacy without manufacturing panic.

Deals are “live”, a gift is “on the way”, and a service is “now fully available”. The timing gives the reader context for why the message matters now, rather than simply pressuring them to act now.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

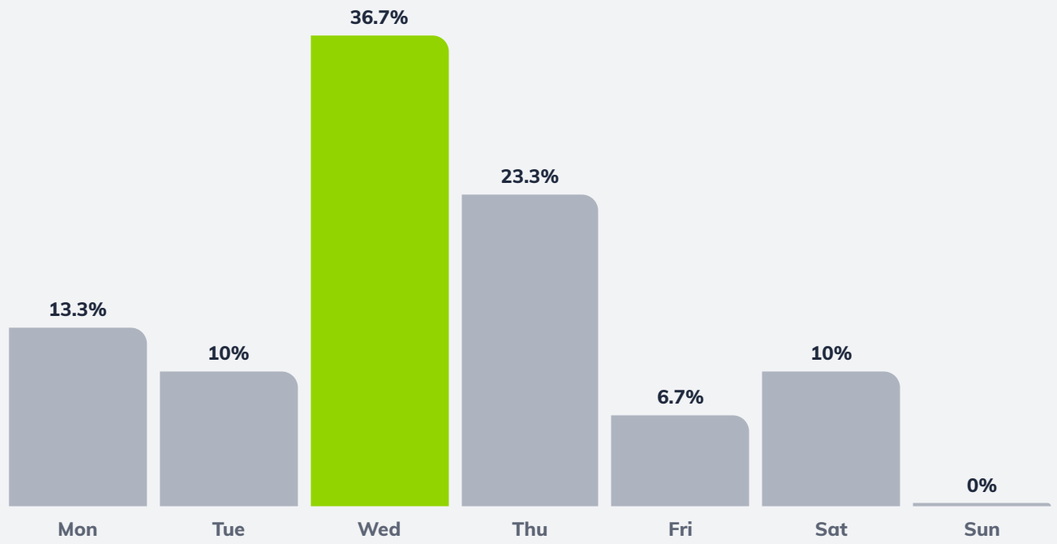
Urgency can be a powerful behavioural nudge. It gives people a reason to act now rather than put the decision off until later. A firm deadline, timely reminder, or limited window makes the action more immediate and harder to overlook. The key is for the urgency to be real and useful. This creates a reason to act, rather than pressure to act.

When the email lands in inboxes matters too.

Wednesday was the most common send day among the top-performing mailers. They accounted for 36.7% of the sample, while 8–9am and 10–11am were the most common time slots, each accounting for 23.3%. These are patterns within this dataset rather than universal rules, but they reinforce the importance of treating timing as part of the message.

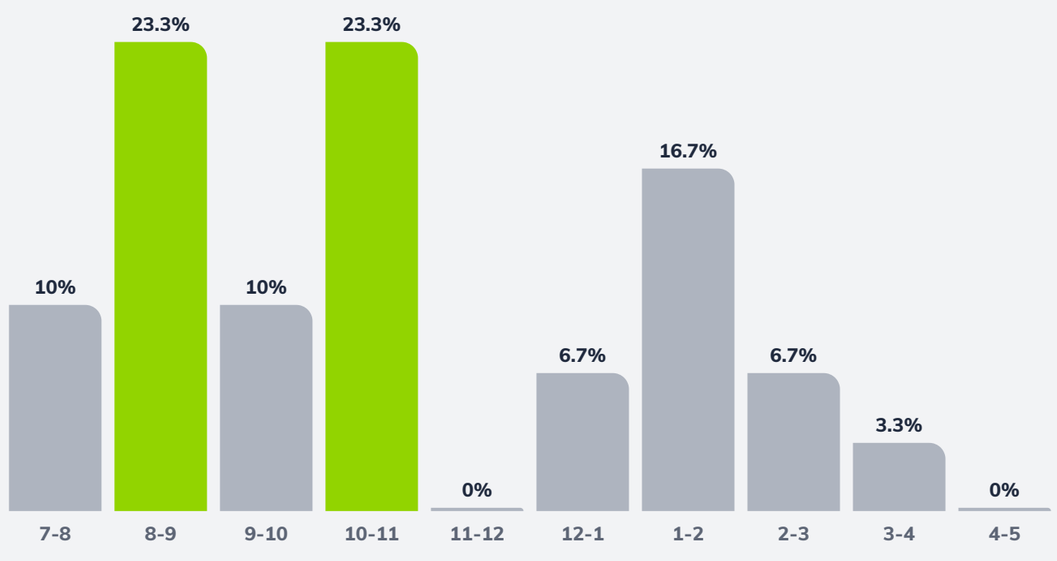
Day of the week

Share of top-performing mailers



Time of the day

Share of top-performing mailers



e Familiarity breeds clicks

Standing out in the inbox doesn't always mean doing something completely different. Sometimes, being recognisable is an advantage.

1 in 3

top-performing mailers came from just two brands

A third of the top-performing mailers came from just two brands, both of which use recognisably repeated subject line and preheader structures. The offers and wording change, but the underlying linguistic architecture remains familiar. This gives readers a useful shortcut: they can quickly recognise who the message is from, what kind of email it is, and what they are likely to get from it.

That familiarity is reinforced by clear, repeated signals of value. 60% of subject lines and preheader pairs use words such as "save", "savings", "reward", "gift", "win", "deals", "exclusive", "benefits", or "free". Almost one in four pairs (23%) put a specific monetary or percentage value directly in front of the reader.

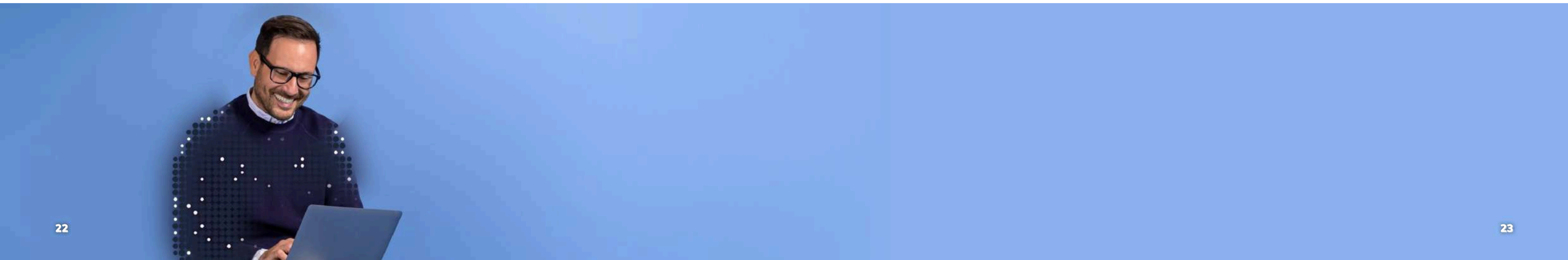
save **savings** **reward** **gift** **win** **deals** **exclusive** **benefits** **free**

Language such as "easy", "seamless", and "auto" also appears across the top-performing mailers, making convenience part of the brand's messaging.

In an inbox increasingly filled with polished and (likely) AI-assisted communication, a recognisable way of communicating becomes particularly useful.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

Consistency helps a brand continue to sound like itself, while clear cues around value and ease reduce the effort required to understand why the message matters.



f Worth a thousand words

The human cues in the top emails weren't limited to language. Across the top-performing mailers, almost all imagery was recognisable and specific to the brand. For example, images with real people, real food, real holiday destinations, product screens, and practical how-to steps.

Rather than filling space, the strongest visuals helped the reader understand, picture, or believe the message.

Make it tangible

Show people what they're actually getting. A product, destination, reward, or app screen makes the offer easier to picture and gives the words something concrete to point to.

Make it easier

Sometimes an image can do the explaining faster. A screenshot showing where to tap or a visual showing what to look for can remove the need for a paragraph of instructions.

Make it believable

Real people, actual products, genuine locations, and recognisable brand assets give useful cues that what they're seeing is credible. Generic or obvious AI imagery can do the opposite.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

Authentic representation plays a role. When an image feels generic, insincere, or disconnected from the reader's lived experience, it can create distance rather than connection. Use imagery that feels recognisable and relevant to what you're offering. What people see should reinforce their reason to trust the message.

7 Tech-led Language

DOES SMARTER = BETTER?

AI, automation, and smart technology are changing how brands communicate. But does talking about technology make an email more appealing to the person receiving it?

To explore this, we looked at emails that placed technology at the centre of their message. We checked for references to smart features, automated services, digital tools, and technological improvements. Importantly, this analysis focuses on the **language used to promote technology**, rather than whether the email itself was written using AI.

10%

had a clear technology or automation focus in their subject lines and preheaders

Across the top-performing emails, explicit technology-led messaging was relatively uncommon. Just 10% had a clear technology or automation focus in their subject lines and preheaders. None explicitly promoted AI tools or technology as the main benefit.

What stands out is how these brands communicated the technology.

Rather than focusing on technical sophistication or innovation, the messages largely translated features into practical benefits. One promised “effortless card updates” to help avoid declined payments, while another invited readers to try a sleep-tracking feature to earn rewards. The technology provided the functionality, but the reader’s benefit remained central.

Smarter isn’t automatically better.

THE TECHNOLOGY	THE READER’S BENEFIT
Automated card updates	**“Effortless” updates that help avoid declined payments**
A sleep-tracking feature	**A way to earn rewards**

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

“Sell the cure, not the medicine.” Don’t make the technology the hero; make what it does for people the hero. Smart features and automation can provide compelling reasons to engage, particularly when they save time, reduce effort, or offer a useful reward. But the language still needs to answer the reader’s most important question: What’s in it for me?

8 AI in Your Inbox

AI is changing how emails are read. But human behaviour still determines whether they’re worth acting on.

With AI increasingly built into inbox technology, messages can be summarised, sorted, and prioritised before we even open them. Behaviourally, we’ve always relied on mental shortcuts to manage information overload. Now, AI is doing some of that heavy lifting for us.

Enter Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO): making content easier for AI to understand.

> **The good news? What works for humans often works for AI, too.**

5 tips for an AI-friendly inbox:

1. **Front-load the value.** Put the important information in your subject line, preheader and opening sentence.
2. **Keep it brief.** Short sentences and simple words. Remove the fluff.
3. **Make it scannable.** Leave breadcrumbs. Think clear headings, bullet points and bold text.
4. **Be specific.** Avoid vague, clickbait subject lines. Say what you mean.
5. **Make action easy.** One clear message and one obvious next step.

BEHAVIOURAL TAKEAWAY

Our research shows that clear benefits, reader-focused language, and specific calls to action are common features of top-performing emails. As AI becomes part of the inbox, clarity matters on both sides of the screen.

→ **For more on AI-assisted inboxes, explore Everlytic’s The Inbox Effect 2026.**

9 The Human Checklist

Before AI, brands had different writers – in-house teams, agencies and freelancers – all working towards a distinct tone of voice.

Now, as more brands use the same Large Language Models (LLMs) to write and edit content, there's a risk that brand language becomes more homogenised, with familiar AI patterns beginning to creep in.

5 common tells of AI-generated content:

1. **Over-neat tripling:** Everything comes in tidy groups of three: "clearer, faster, and smarter".
2. **Predictable contrasts:** Structures like "It's not about X. It's about Y."
3. **Too many dramatic pivots:** "Here's the catch." "The problem?" "The result?"
4. **Polished but generic language:** Technically good writing that could belong to almost any person or brand.
5. **Suspiciously consistent rhythm:** Similar sentence lengths, paragraph structures, and patterns repeated throughout.

Do you recognise any of these? LLMs tend to fall back on familiar writing patterns. When brands rely too heavily on them, their messages can start to sound suspiciously similar, losing the distinctive voice that makes them recognisable and worth reading in the first place.

Sound like you, not like everyone else.

THE HUMAN CHECKLIST

How to avoid the sea of sameness

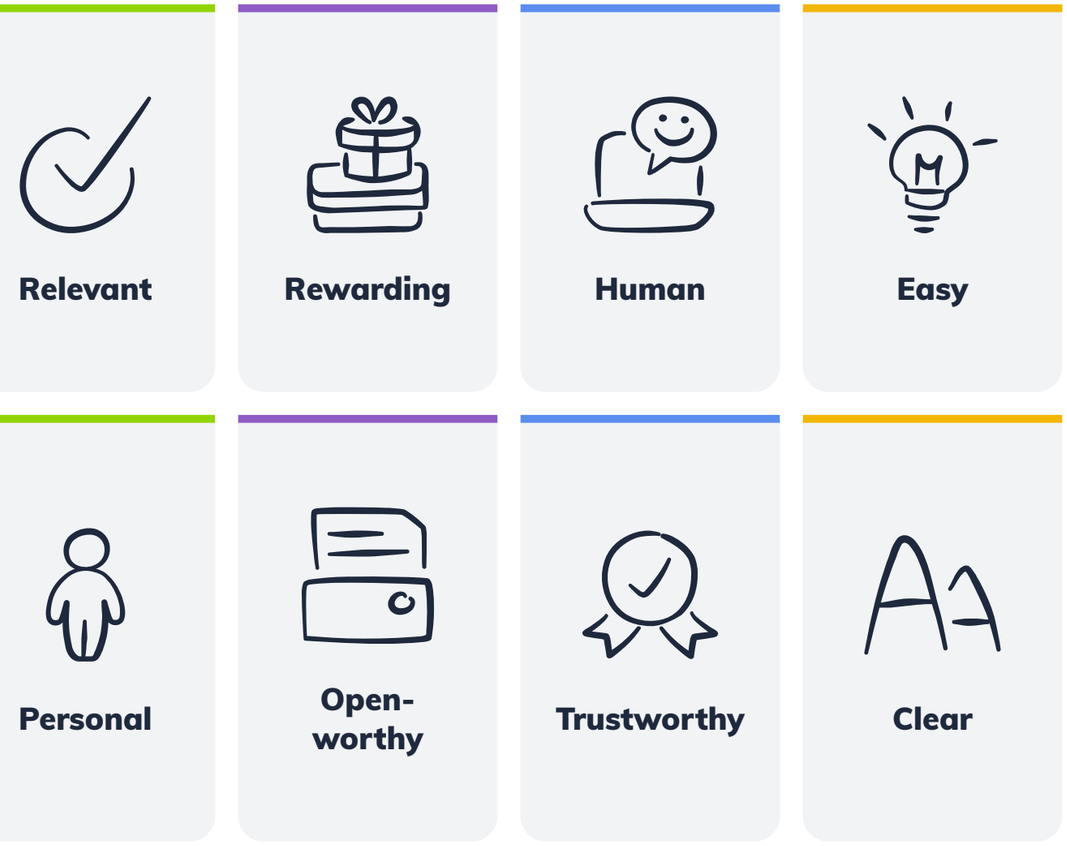
AI is here to stay, and for good reason. It can save time, help teams do more, and make relatively good writing more accessible. But, as more of us turn to the same tools, often in much the same way, there's a risk that distinctive brand voices start to disappear.

The answer isn't to use less AI, but to use it more thoughtfully. This means better prompts and richer context on what makes your brand sound distinctly like you.

We've turned the key findings from this report into a simple, shareable checklist – with some helpful AI prompts – that you and your team can use before pressing send on your next mailer.

Eight behavioural questions are included to help you look at your email from the reader's point of view. Use these to check whether it feels relevant, rewarding, human, easy, personal, open-worthy, and trustworthy.

Use AI more thoughtfully, not less.



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Make your mailer	Ask yourself	What good looks like	Prompt AI to
1. Relevant	**Is this worth my attention?**	The message reflects something useful about the reader - their needs, behaviour, product, context or interests.	*"What in this message is really relevant to this audience? Remove anything that doesn't earn their attention."*
2. Rewarding	**Can I see what's in it for me?**	The value is concrete and easy to spot. A saving, reward, useful update, opportunity or clear reason to care.	*"Rewrite this so the value to the reader is clear early on. Make the benefit concrete, without exaggerating it."*
3. Human	**Would a person really say this?**	Natural words, conversational rhythm, some personality. No corporate filler or suspiciously polished AI-speak.	*"Make this sound like a smart human wrote it. Remove corporate filler, AI clichés, unnecessary tripling and overly neat sentence patterns. Keep some natural rhythm and personality."*
4. Easy	**Do I get it immediately?**	One main message with plain language, short copy, minimal mental admin and a single call to action.	*"Make this easier to understand on a quick scan. Keep one main message, use plain English and make the next action obvious."*
5. Personal	**Does this feel meant for me?**	Personalisation makes the message more useful rather than simply proving the brand has data.	*"Use what we know about this audience only where it makes the message more useful. Remove personalisation that feels unnecessary, creepy or decorative."*
6. Open-worthy	**Has the subject line earned my attention?**	The subject line gives a reason to open. The preheader adds something useful rather than repeating it.	*"Give me five subject line and preheader combinations. Make the reason to open clear, avoid clickbait, and make sure the preheader adds new information."*
7. Trustworthy	**Does this deserve my trust?**	No fake urgency, clickbait or exaggerated promises. The message delivers what the subject line promises.	*"Check this for anything that could undermine trust - exaggerated claims, fake urgency, vague promises or clickbait. Rewrite those parts without making the message less useful."*
8. Clear	**Is my main message part of the AI summary?**	The main takeaway and benefit are obvious, even when the email is condensed.	*"Summarise this email in one sentence. Is the main benefit still clear or has something important been lost?"*

10 The Final Test

As AI and automation reshape how emails are created and consumed, the good news is that email as a channel remains remarkably resilient.

The strongest mailers in our 2026 sample show us why: the humanity is felt, the value is easy to spot, and the instruction is clear. These give the reader a reason to believe it was genuinely meant for them.

Global stats suggest that over half of email marketers now use AI to personalise content, optimise send times, and better understand customer behaviour – all in a bid to improve opens, reads, and clicks. In simple terms: AI helps marketers make better decisions about what to send, to whom, and when. We now need to help AI to sound more like us.

> **Technology makes communication at scale possible.**
>
> The person receiving the message still needs to understand why it matters to them.

Across a business's ecosystem, emails help people stay informed and take their next step. Each exchange adds to how they experience your company. Over time, those experiences shape what they expect from the relationship.

Everlytic provides the communication backbone that helps businesses sustain these connections at scale. Coupled with this research's findings, you now have insights to the language and designs you need for your messages to earn attention and encourage action.

Before you send again, consider who's opening it. What do they need from you, and have you made it easy to understand? And, the final test...

Would YOU open it? And would you know what to do next?

11 Get in Touch

Want to explore more?

This is the fifth report in a series of insights papers presenting communication patterns that work best to boost consumer email engagement across various industries. You can download the full series here.

everlytic
Smart Communication Software

www.everlytic.com

sales@everlytic.com

BreadCrumbs

www.thebreadcrumbs.co.za

hello@thebreadcrumbs.co.za

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Make sure every send earns it.

Everlytic helps South Africa's top companies reach more customers and drive the results that matter.

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www.everlytic.com | sales@everlytic.com