litmus

The State of Email
Innovations Report

Data, insights, and trends to help you adapt and
prepare your email program for what's to come.

2024

In this report, you'll learn:

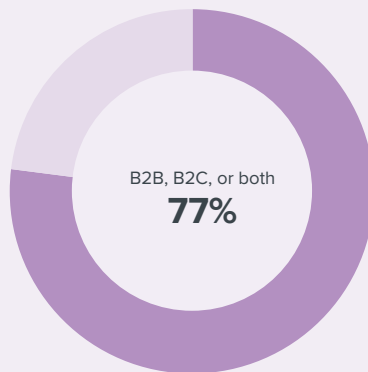## Understand the innovations and trends shaping email marketing this year

Email has sustained its place in marketing strategies for years, but it's anything but static.

We surveyed nearly 1,000 marketers between January 29th and February 29th of 2024 to understand their priorities and preparations for the year ahead.
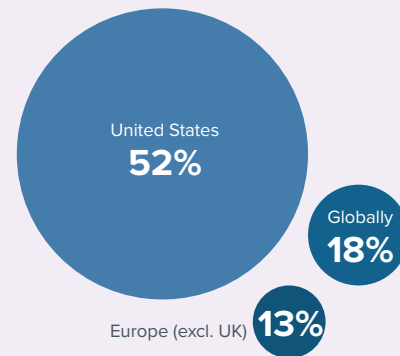
Read on to learn about what's ahead and how to adapt your marketing to stay ahead.

Who responded to our survey?

Respondents market

B2B, B2C, or both
77%

Location

United States
52%

Globally
18%

Europe (excl. UK) **13%**

> 500 employees
40%

< 500 employees
57%

Top Industries

Software + Technology

Marketing/PR

Retail

Financial services

39% Litmus customers

61% Not Litmus customers

Changes to the email landscape

Email marketing's role is changing

Marketers have to play by new rules

Industry-wide updates are on the horizon. First, **teams need to pay close attention to their deliverability** after recent [Yahoo and Google sender requirements](#).

The loss of third-party cookies is in the future too, but are marketers prepared?

Email will bolster the loss of third-party cookies

30% of brands plan to increase their overall email marketing spend this year, and they've chosen a great time to invest. Your email list is a rich source of [zero- and first-party data](#) that will power automation and personalization.
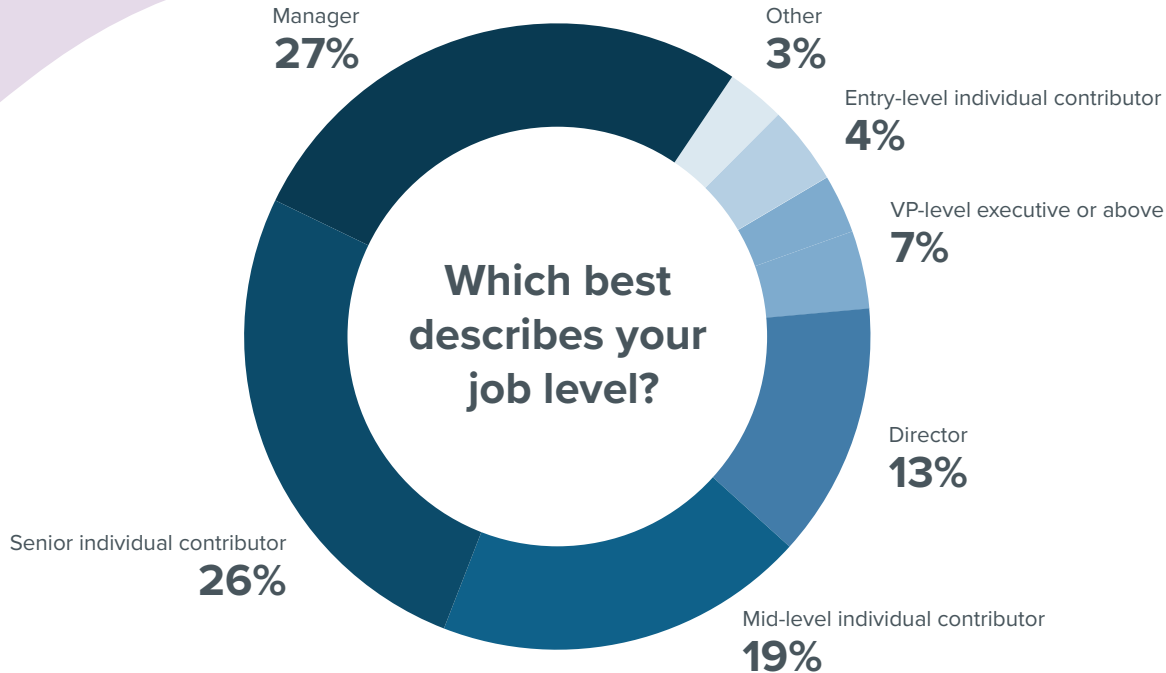
You need email to do more than convert

Email's high average ROI has been an inspiring stat for years, but **72% of marketers aren't sure what their email ROI is**. Which begs the question—is it how we should define email success?

Awareness, engagement, and relationship-building is where email shines. Since only 5% of your audience is [ready to buy](#), the value of email comes from loyalty and brand connection.
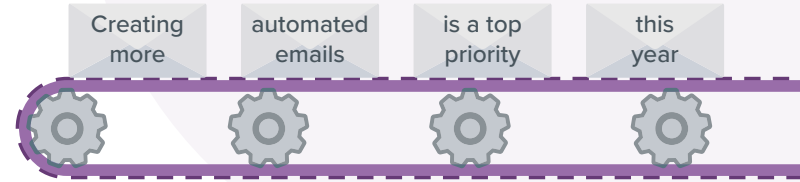
Email marketing talent is advancing

Who is in charge of email marketing? More than half of our respondents are managers and senior individual contributors. There's also a trend toward more advanced roles overseeing email with a focus on strategy and planning.

18%
will spend more for personnel this year

Which best describes your job level?

Manager
27%

Other
3%

Entry-level individual contributor
4%

VP-level executive or above
7%

Director
13%

Mid-level individual contributor
19%

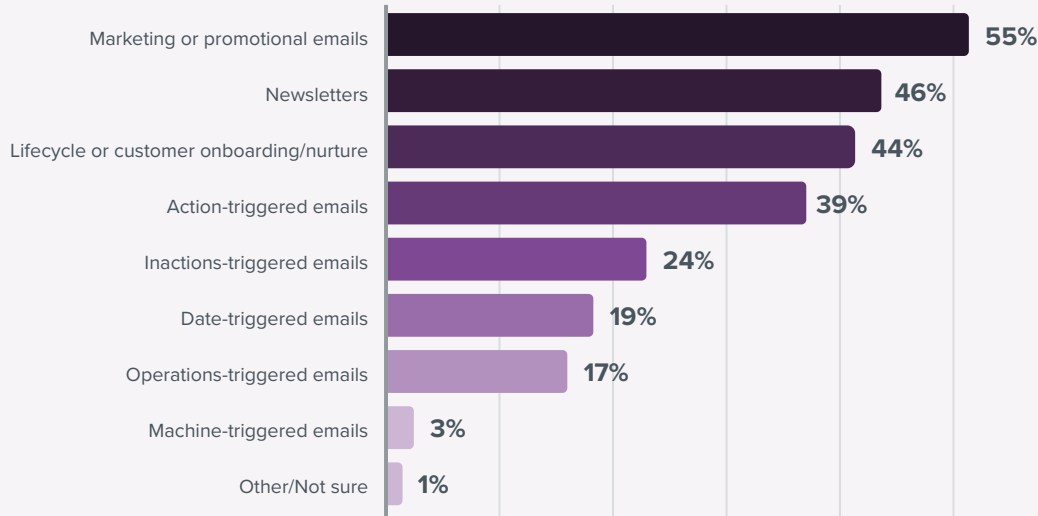Senior individual contributor
26%

Automation is on the rise

Email is a critical channel to develop customer relationships, and lifecycle automations are the ideal tool. While promotional messages and newsletters are still the most-used emails, relational emails round out the top five. Automated nurture sequences and transactional emails help marketers develop customer relationships without overwhelming the inbox.

Creating more | automated emails | is a top priority | this year

How does your company currently use email?

Marketing or promotional emails	55%
Newsletters	46%
Lifecycle or customer onboarding/nurture	44%
Action-triggered emails	39%
Inactions-triggered emails	24%
Date-triggered emails	19%
Operations-triggered emails	17%
Machine-triggered emails	3%
Other/Not sure	1%

Trust your automations with Litmus Email Guardian
Your critical email automations work independently to connect with your audience, but what happens if an issue goes unnoticed? Litmus Email Guardian monitors your emails 24/7 to alert you to problems with your template, links, images, and more.

New Gmail and Yahoo sender requirements should put your focus on deliverability

Gmail and Yahoo have new deliverability rules for mass senders. While the details are pretty straightforward, it's a reminder to pay attention to deliverability. Good email deliverability ensures you reach your audience, so you can always use email to build trust, enhance engagement, and maintain customer relationships.

Most respondents do monitor deliverability (phew). There are 15% that don't, and another 15% who aren't sure if they do, though. Google Postmaster Tools was voted the most-used deliverability tool, and it's free.

Litmus also has Spam Filter Testing to help you prioritize email deliverability. Discover if you're blocklisted, confirm security authentications, and test against major spam filters.

30%

of respondents don't measure deliverability or aren't sure if they do

"Email success goes well beyond ticking boxes—it's about fostering trust and loyalty. By sending responsibly, you not only enhance the subscriber experience but also safeguard your brand from misuse. While Google and Yahoo are the ones currently in the spotlight, stricter rules are becoming the norm across mailbox providers to counter rising email threats.
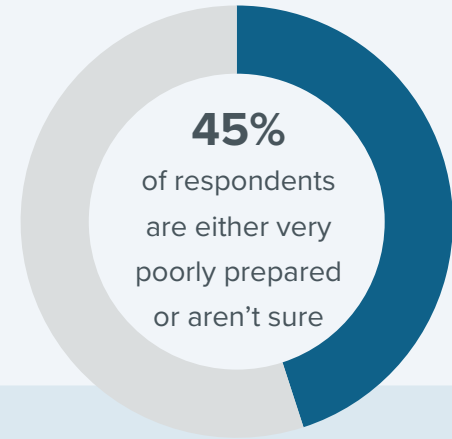
My advice? Embrace change; the data shows non-compliance leads to delivery delays and domain-based failures. Conversely, simplifying the unsubscribe process can reduce spam rates by up to 30%. So, hop on board because this train is moving, with or without you!"
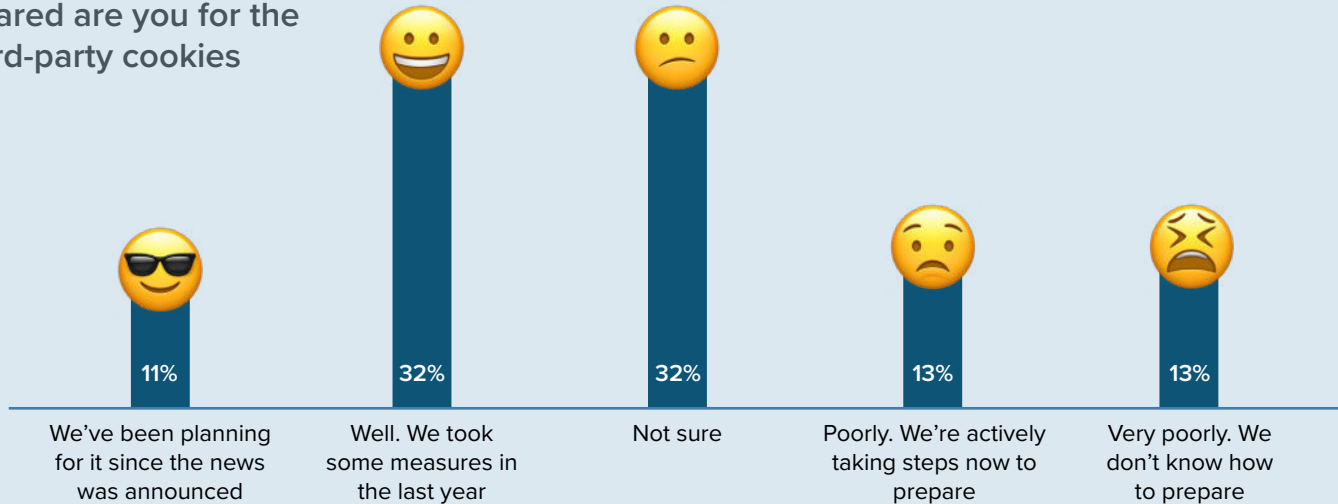
Lauren Meyer
Chief Marketing Officer, SocketLabs

Ready or not, third-party cookies are going away

Google will phase out tracking Chrome users in early 2025. Since there are an estimated 3.45 billion global Chrome users and the browser has nearly 64% market share, marketers must fundamentally change how they target this huge majority of their audience. Are you ready?

45%

of respondents are either very poorly prepared or aren't sure

How prepared are you for the loss of third-party cookies

11%	32%	32%	13%	13%
We've been planning for it since the news was announced	Well. We took some measures in the last year	Not sure	Poorly. We're actively taking steps now to prepare	Very poorly. We don't know how to prepare

Email's zero- and first-party data can make up for the loss

Adjusting to the loss of third-party cookies will undoubtedly be a change for marketers, but email is ready and waiting to fill in the gaps.

Self-reported zero-party data from preference centers and first-party insights from interactive content are reliable data-capture sources. For example, using a Litmus Personalize poll in your email gathers actionable first-party data and provides engaging experiences in the inbox.

Then, you can use your newfound customer data across your marketing channels.

The 36% of respondents with poor or very poor email integration with other channels can use the loss of third-party cookies as a catalyst for change.

30% plan to invest more on cross-channel integration this year

"Data collection and management is a continual challenge; it's not a "set it and forget it" proposition. Be flexible on what you want to know from customers and how you'll ask for it. Establish your own 'why' for collecting certain types of information, and form an actionable plan to make it come to life in a more personalized and contextually relevant customer experience.

You'd be surprised how much information your subscribers will offer up, once you prove that you are asking them questions with the intent of making their life easier or better."
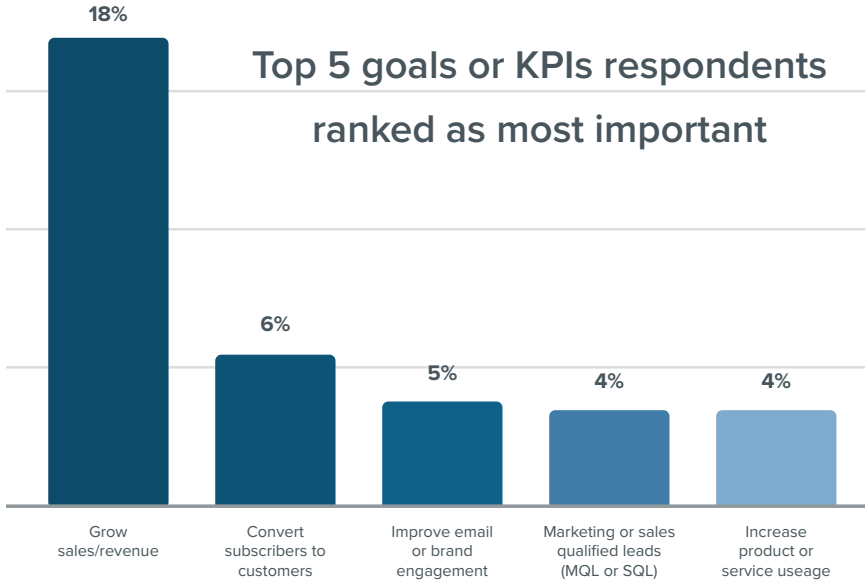
Cynthia Price
Senior Vice President of Marketing, Litmus

Is ROI an important metric anymore?

Email was voted the most effective marketing channel this year, and marketers don't even need to know its ROI (Return on Investment) to grant it that award.

Email is more than a conversion point, so ROI isn't the ultimate test of performance. Marketers should lean into email as a valuable channel for building relationships and generating brand awareness—especially for that 95% of your audience who aren't ready to buy.

Top 5 goals or KPIs respondents ranked as most important

Goal/KPI	Percentage
Grow sales/revenue	18%
Convert subscribers to customers	6%
Improve email or brand engagement	5%
Marketing or sales qualified leads (MQL or SQL)	4%
Increase product or service useage	4%

72% of marketers don't know their email ROI

What marketing leaders consider success in email

"Considering 95% of your audience aren't ready to buy, by thinking about email purely from a conversion perspective, you're limiting what success looks like in email—because you're not going to get that 95% to instantly convert with your next email.

Instead, consider using email to nurture and build relationships by providing them with useful, relevant, valuable content about your brand. In doing so, you'll be building up awareness for your brand in the inbox. So the next time they see your brand on social media, in a paid ad, or on a webinar, getting that conversion will be much easier."

Jaina Mistry
Director of Brand and Content Marketing, Litmus

How email marketers use AI

Marketers have only scratched the surface of AI-powered email

Nearly half of marketers use AI in email marketing

You can't escape the AI buzz, and email is no exception. **45% of teams currently use AI in email** marketing and an extra 21% want to start this year.

Brainstorming is the most common GenAI task

Currently, marketers use AI for text-based tasks like brainstorming, copywriting, and subject line generation. **Only 1% use AI for image generation** right now.

There's untapped AI potential that marketing teams want to use

ChatGPT is the most popular GenAI tool marketers use, but there are more email marketing opportunities than generating subject lines.

GenAI adoption is consistent

GenAI (Generative AI) usage in email marketing is similar to our previous surveys, and simpler tasks like brainstorming are still the go-tos. **However, not everyone is confident in AI**. Survey respondents called out concerns about inaccurate information, copyright, and legal considerations as a reason for why they're avoiding it.

Yes

1%
AI Image creation

10%
We use AI to aid in brainstorming

7%
We use AI to write email copy

4%
We use AI to write subject lines

No

13%
Not yet and **we're not** planning to

11%
Not yet but **we are** planning to

4%
Not sure

60%
of marketers use ChatGPT for AI tasks
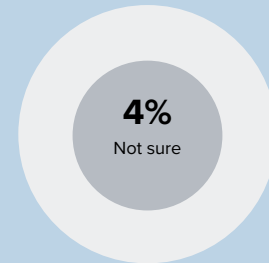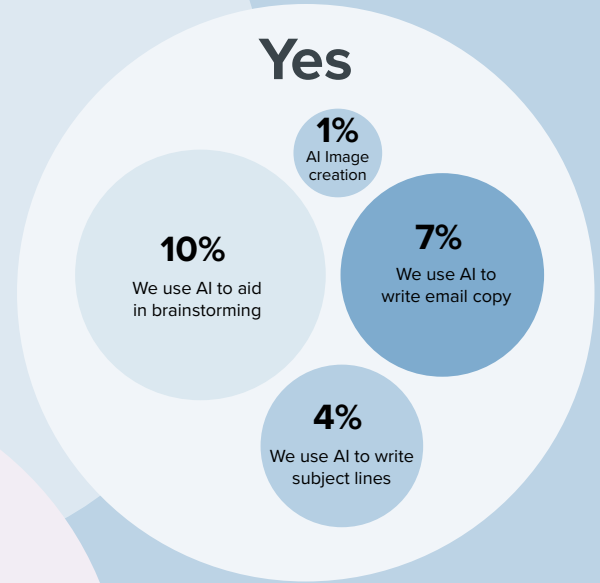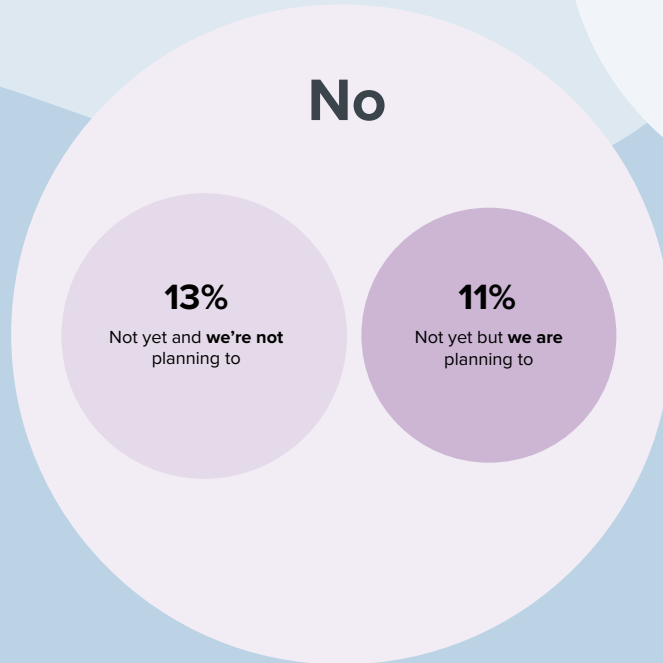
Marketers can use AI for more than subject lines

Some marketers are already seeing results from GenAI—**40% have seen a little boost in performance from AI-generated content** and 9% have seen much improvement. But GenAI tools like ChatGPT are just scratching the surface of AI and machine learning in email.

Here's what marketers should explore this year:

QA Testing: find errors in code

Review: fine-tune elements like writing tone

Analysis: compare campaign performance to find top-performing messaging, automations, or send times

Predictive product recommendations: automatically suggest products based on customer actions

Subscriber scoring: find your disengaged subscribers and predict who is most likely to buy

31% plan to spend **more on AI and machine learning** in 2024

"Since ChatGPT was popularized in 2022, I've found many ways to incorporate GenAI into my email process. Initially, I mostly used ChatGPT to help when facing writer's block with email subject lines, body copy, or call-to-actions. As time passed, my ChatGPT use cases evolved. I began using it for audience segmentation, creating frameworks for email sequences, or even when I needed a second opinion on portions of email code. The next area I'd like to explore is using AI to automate more manual tasks in my email workflow."
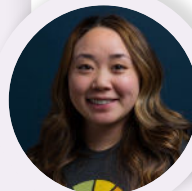
Tracie Pang
Email Marketing Manager, Litmus

Email personalization tactics

It's time to go beyond merge tags to surprise and delight

Most marketers are happy with their ESP's personalization options

ESPs can handle simple personalization like names in the subject lines or merge tags, and marketers are generally pleased with those capabilities.
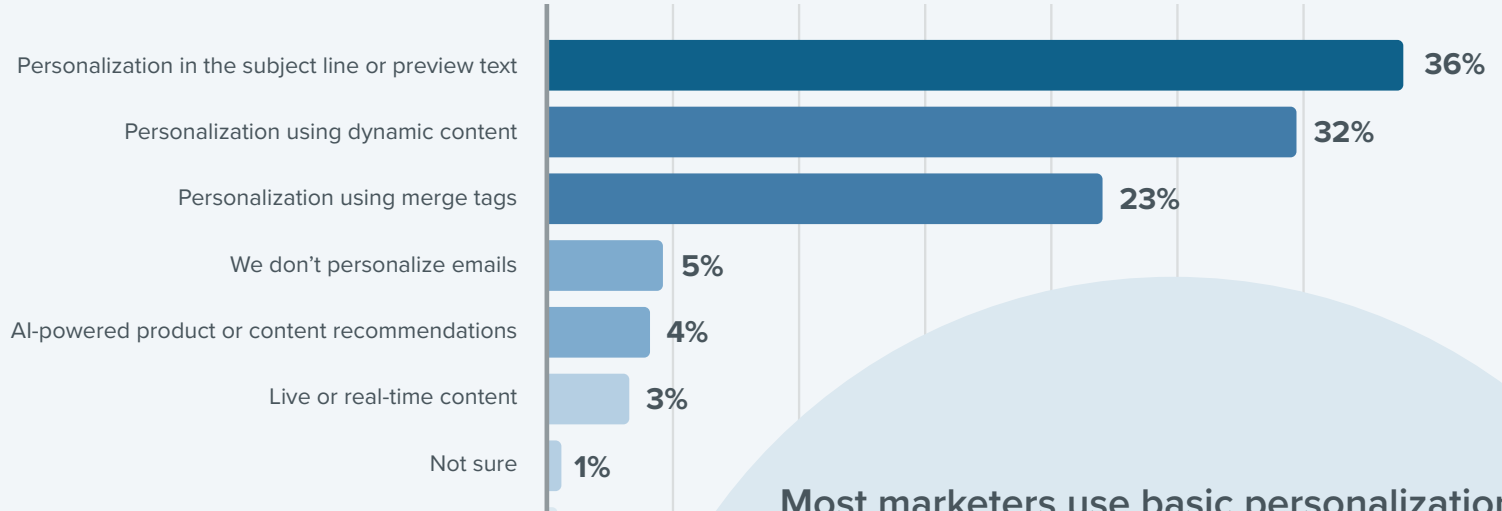
Expanding personalization is a high priority

Live and dynamic content is still a niche strategy, which means there's **an opportunity to surprise and delight** your audience.

Inadequate data and resources are holding marketers back—but that can be fixed

If you want to use more personalization but roadblocks stand in the way, **you aren't alone**.

How does your company personalize emails?

Category	Percentage
Personalization in the subject line or preview text	36%
Personalization using dynamic content	32%
Personalization using merge tags	23%
We don't personalize emails	5%
AI-powered product or content recommendations	4%
Live or real-time content	3%
Not sure	1%

69% of marketers said their ESP handles personalization **well** or **very well**

Most marketers use basic personalization

ESPs are by far the most common place for marketers to personalize email content, since most have basic personalization built in. But audiences are accustomed to seeing their name in the subject line, so is it enough to delight them anymore?

If you want to stand out, use live content

Only **7% of marketers use live or real-time content**, but marketers are intrigued—the tactic showed up again and again when we asked you what you wish you could do with personalization. Open-time personalization is an opportunity to surprise and delight your audience, but you will have to look beyond your ESP to make it a reality.

> "Customers want to receive more relevant, personalized emails, and delightful emails—but marketers struggle to find the right data points to create these experiences. Using a tool like Litmus Personalize, marketers can go beyond the limitations of their ESP to create truly personalized emails customers expect, while also providing the perfect opportunity to collect critical zero- and first-party data to help inform future campaigns."

Daniel Rosen
Senior Account Manager, Litmus

Personalize your emails with dynamic images

Live content example: countdown timers

Dynamic [countdown timers](#) add urgency and specificity to emails. Use them to call out the final hours of an important sale, show how much longer a subscription lasts, and build anticipation for a launch.
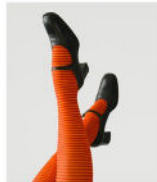

Drive urgency and excitement for time-sensitive product launches with a live countdown timer.

wonderskin

SKIN   MAKEUP   BODY

SUMMER

This season's *hottest lip kit is dropping in*

3 DAYS

EXPLORE SUMMER SOIREE

SOIREE

SUMMER SOIREE

Four new sultry shade for every

Drive urgency for time-sensitive sale events with a live countdown timer.

WONDERBOWL   Read online

Countdown to Aspen

Tournament starts in

80 : 07 : 39

DAYS   HOURS   MINUTES

Buy Tickets

Wonderbowl Park City

Interviews & Features

Exclusive Interview
Martinez: Victory is short lived when there's another Wonderbowl to prep for

Players to watch
Johnathan begins training in the Dolomites in preparation for Aspen this year.

25%
of respondents use countdown timers if they use live content

Live content example: progress bars

Who doesn't love the feeling of checking off a to-do item? [Progress bars](#) encourage subscribers to keep moving toward reward incentive goals, onboarding, project progress, or fundraising goals.

12%
of respondents use progress bars if they use live content
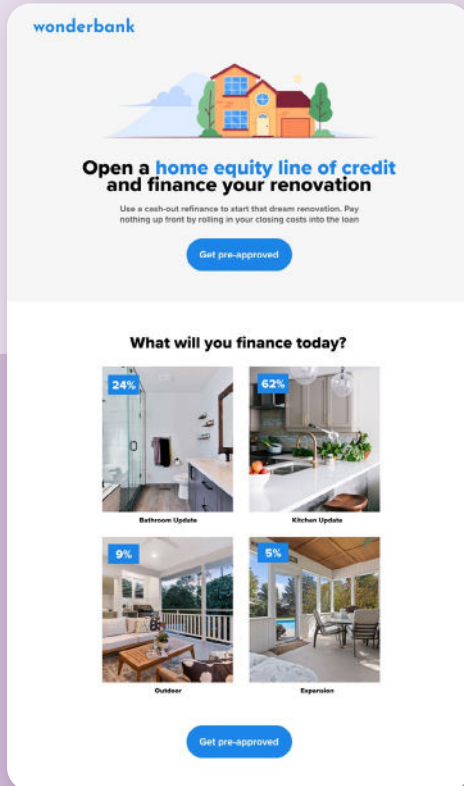
Live content example: live polls

[Live polls](#) lets you collect customer preference data for segmentation, gauge interest in a topic, and get subscribers involved in the community with a little fun.
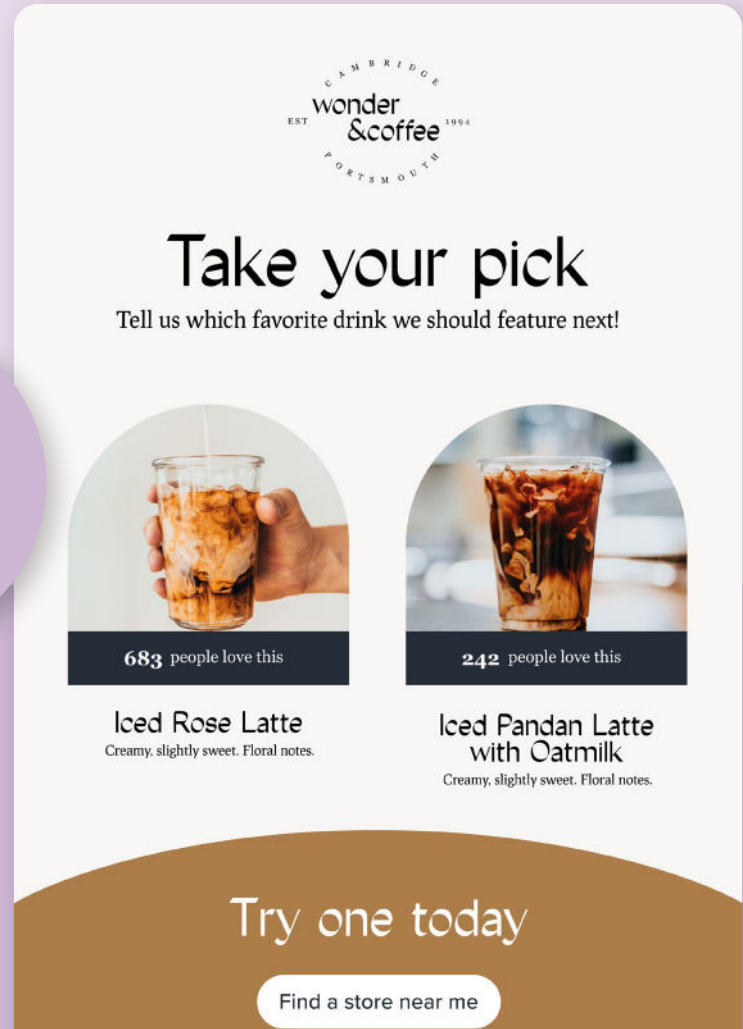
10% of respondents use live polls if they use live content

How to overcome common personalization hurdles

- Branch out from your ESP to try new personalization tactics with other commonly-used tools like Litmus Personalize

- Use tested and approved Litmus templates to try new elements with less QA

- Get inspired by real personalized email examples in our Email Gallery

- Connect with and learn from fellow marketers (here's how we personalize emails)

08 : 14 : 57
hours   minutes   seconds

Expanding personalization is the second highest priority for respondents in 2024

"To announce the release of Litmus Live Polls to our newsletter audience, we decided to show subscribers exactly what a Live Poll in an email could look like and asked subscribers to vote whether they were "team cat" or "team dog." Live Polls typically result in high email engagement. This specific scenario resulted in 17.3% click-through rate in the newsletter—that's **an increase of 19.1% compared to newsletters that don't feature a Live Poll**."

Tracie Pang
Email Marketing Manager, Litmus

What marketers find challenging about personalizing emails

Category	Percentage
Inadequate data to effectively personalize	24%
Lack of resources to experiment with personalization	21%
Requires technical expertise to implement	17%
Lack of inspiration on how to use it	13%
Inability to thoroughly QA test highly personalized content	12%
Lack of technology to build and implement personalized content	11%
Not sure	4%
Other	3%
Long turnaround times from my personalization vendor	2%

litmus

Email personalization *for all*

Whether you're new to email personalization or a pro, you can tap into email marketers' most effective trends with Litmus.

You're invited
Phillip

07	21	59
HOURS	MINUTES	SECONDS

Every Litmus plan includes the tools you need to deliver the right message at the right moment—while making sure it's error-free and ready to drive results—empowering you to make every send count.

Get started today

Innovations in email design

Streamlined production and simplified designs rule the new year

Email designers are embracing new tools

While **Adobe Photoshop is still the most popular design platform**, tools like Figma and Canva are quickly gaining popularity.

## Dark Mode and accessibility don't boost performance, but they're still worthwhile

Marketers don't see a big performance boost from Dark Mode and accessible design, but there's value in **creating experiences that everyone can enjoy**.

Modular emails speed up the workflow

Email templates and **modular design systems create beautiful emails, faster** as marketers manage multiple email builds at once.

Which graphic design programs does your company use for email marketing on a regular basis?

37% — Adobe Photoshop

23% — Figma

22% — Adobe Illustrator

19% — Canva

14% — Adobe InDesign
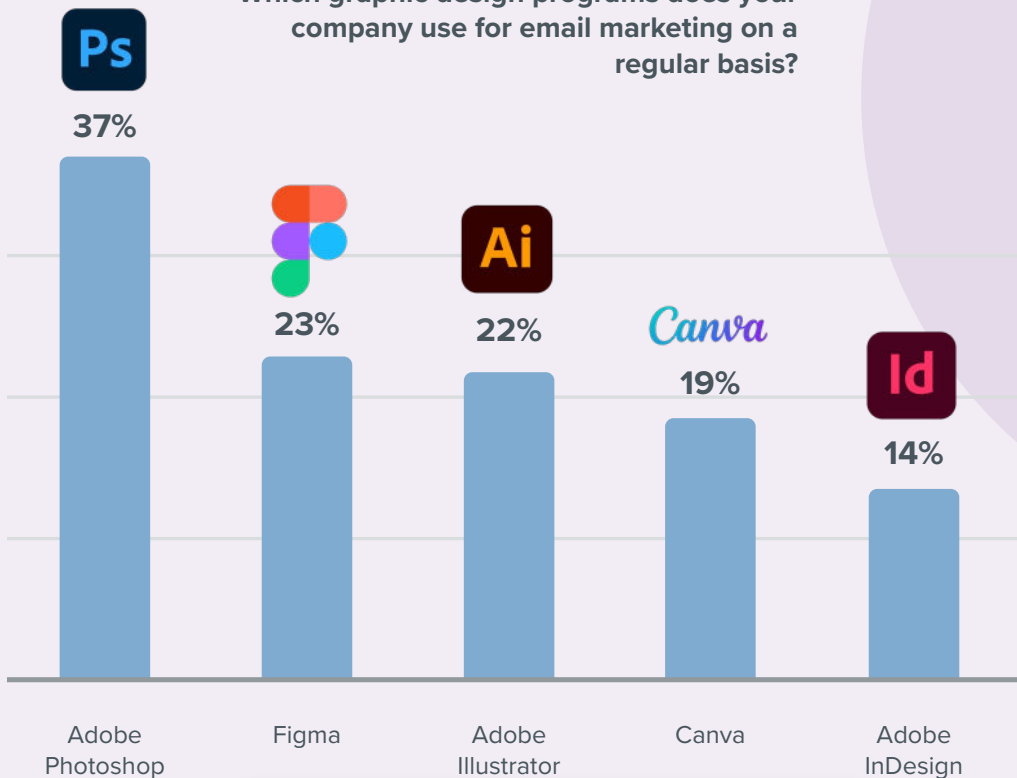
👆 **On the rise**. Figma had the most change since last year. Going from fourth to second place.
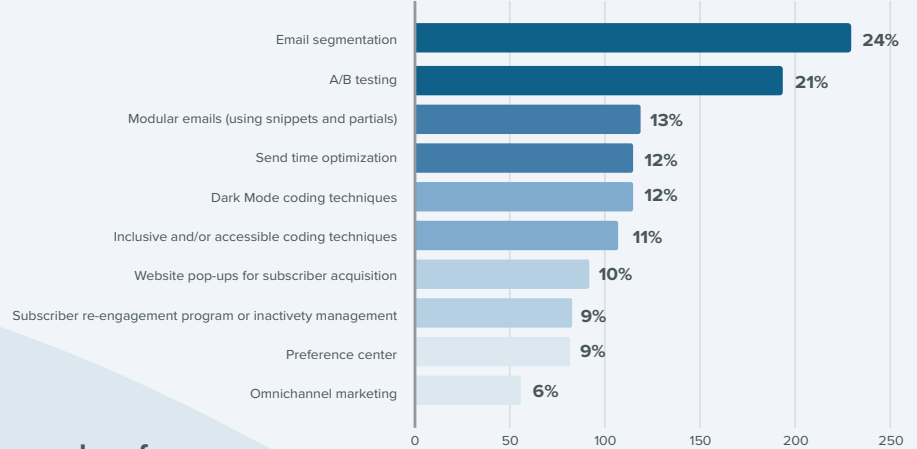
There's an email design tool for every marketer

Marketers of all types want to create amazing emails, and the go-to tools are changing. Professional designers prefer Figma, while marketers without an in-house design team are relying more and more on Canva to create designs.
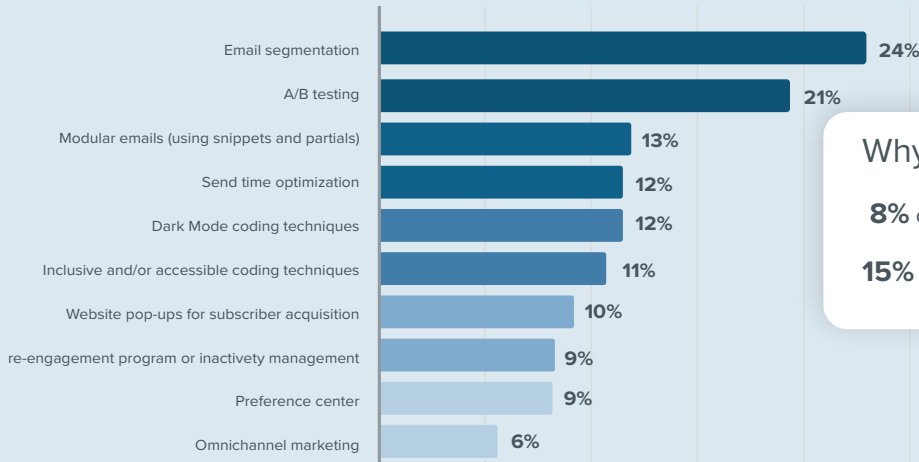
The world needs accessible emails

Quantifying the impact of some design choices is difficult, and marketers felt the most uncertain about the impact of Dark Mode and accessible design. However, the value of these practices is reaching as wide of an audience as possible and ensuring they can engage with your email.

Top 10 tactics and technologies used by respondents

Tactic	Percentage
Email segmentation	24%
A/B testing	21%
Modular emails (using snippets and partials)	13%
Send time optimization	12%
Dark Mode coding techniques	12%
Inclusive and/or accessible coding techniques	11%
Website pop-ups for subscriber acquisition	10%
Subscriber re-engagement program or inactivety management	9%
Preference center	9%
Omnichannel marketing	6%

Top 10 Tactics and technologies that have improved performance
(A little improvement, some improvement, and much improvement)

| Tactic	Percentage
Email segmentation	24%
A/B testing	21%
Modular emails (using snippets and partials)	13%
Send time optimization	12%
Dark Mode coding techniques	12%
Inclusive and/or accessible coding techniques	11%
Website pop-ups for subscriber acquisition	10%
re-engagement program or inactivety management	9%
Preference center	9%
Omnichannel marketing	6%

Why it matters

8% of the U.S. population has visual impairments

15% of the world's population experiences some form of disability

Modular emails speed up turnaround times

Marketers are juggling more—the rate of teams [producing up to five emails at a time doubled](#) from 2023 to 2024. Production needs to be as fast and easy as possible, and modular design systems could be the answer. **80% of teams who use modular designs take 2 weeks or less to create a single email**.
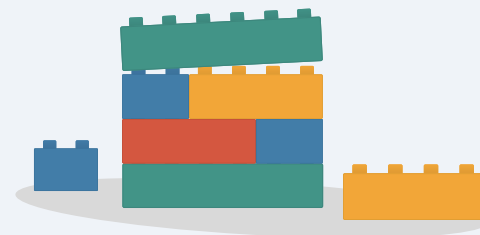

77%
of respondents who use modular designs saw much improvement in their email program

"Ever since we started using a modular design system, my email production time has been cut down significantly. Emails that used to take me hours, now can be done in half the time! Combining the modules that I created with Litmus Design Library has only increased my productivity and **now I can create some emails in as little as 10 minutes!**

P.S. I know this quote sounds totally marketing-y and corn-y but it's 100% true. I would be lost without my modular design system."
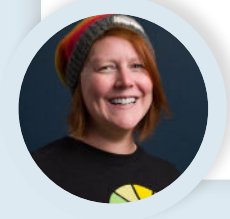
Carin Slater
Email and Content Growth Marketing Manager, Litmus

Put these innovations into action

As we wind down our report and ramp up the year, here's what you can do to prepare for change and make the most of email in 2024.

1. Prepare for the loss of third-party cookies

☐ Assess your third-party cookie reliance

☐ Make zero- and first-party data your top priority

Watch on-demand: First-Party, Best Party: Saying Goodbye to Third-Party Data

2. Protect email deliverability in the wake of new sender requirements

☐ Authenticate your emails using security protocols like DKIM, SPF, and DMARC

☐ Implement one-click list-unsubscribe, and honor unsubscribes within two days

☐ Maintain a spam complaint rate under 0.3% (no more than three spam reports for every 1,000 messages)

Read more: The New Email Deliverability Rules: How to Make Sure You Reach Your Gmail and Yahoo Subscribers

3. Delight your audience with live content and unique personalization with Litmus Personalize

☐ Use live content to customize at scale

☐ Try our quick-start personalization templates

Read more: How To Create Inspiring Personalized Emails

4. Ensure your emails are Dark Mode-friendly and accessible

☐ Use Litmus Accessibility Checks before sending

☐ Preview and test your emails in Dark Mode across email clients and devices

Read more: How Does Your Email Sound?

5. Implement modular email design to speed up your workflow

☐ Look for design patterns across your templates

☐ Define standards and brand guidelines

☐ Build and test our boilerplate HTML

Read more: Email Modules: Your Secret to Working Smarter

About Us

Litmus is an all-in-one email marketing platform empowering marketers of all stripes to build, test, personalize, and analyze every email.

From solutions for effective email personalization to an airtight QA process monitored by cutting-edge emerging email technology, over 700,000 marketers trust Litmus to help them send emails that just click.

Start your free trial