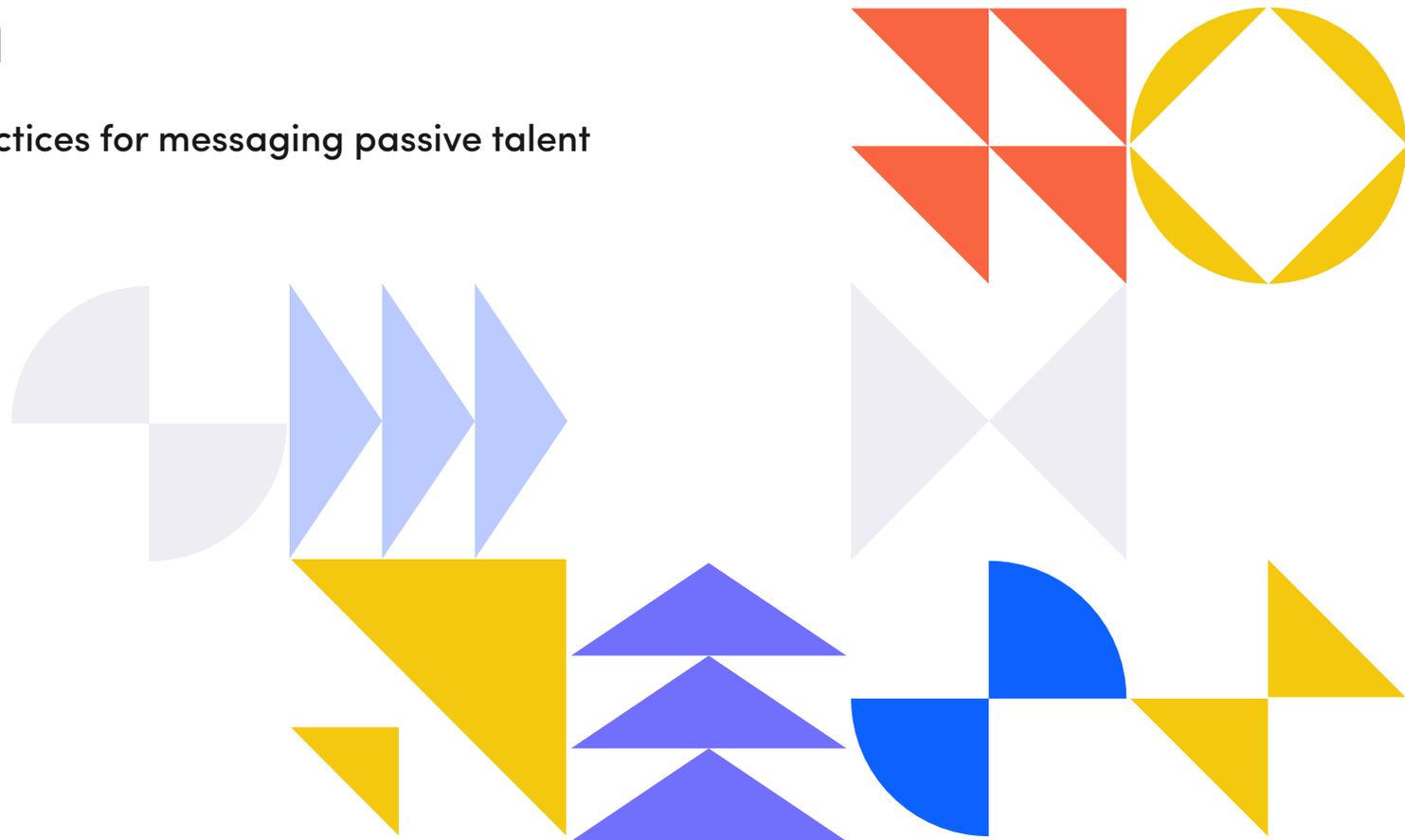**Gem**

The definitive guide for recruiting email outreach

Benchmarks and best practices for messaging passive talent

Introduction

Amidst the market downturn of 2022—and regardless of what might be going on elsewhere in their organizations—recruiting teams are acutely aware of one thing: the roles they're hiring for are as competitive as ever. 80% of separations are now initiated by employees (for context, it was 40% in 2020). 4.4 million people quit their jobs of their own volition in April, another 4.3 million quit in May, and 1 in 5 workers still intend to quit this year. So while the U.S. saw 11.4 million job openings posted in April and another 11.25 million in May, the trend in quits is set to continue for the foreseeable future.

Gem

As talent—most of whom aren't actively looking, but are sought out—voluntarily quit their jobs for better opportunities elsewhere, the talent shortage is here to stay. Yes, freezes and layoffs are happening; but regardless of macroeconomic conditions, many roles remain competitive. And you're likely reading this because yours are among them.

Up to 80% of recruiting now happens prior to application, meaning the very top of the funnel is probably getting more attention from your team than it has before. And it now takes more than it's ever taken to engage with, and hold the attention of, talent. Of course, recruiting technologies (like Gem!) now exist that automate outreach and centrally track top-of-funnel work, giving teams visibility into email open rates, click-through rates, response rates, and interested rates. With this data, every talent acquisition team can examine and analyze the impact of its own unique efforts, and reiterate on and refine future outreach.

Still, it can be invaluable to see outreach benchmarks and best practices across industries, for a broader story—backed by an abundance of data—of what works. That's why we've republished "The definitive guide for recruiting email outreach," at a time when outreach to passive talent—and the employer branding efforts it sustains—means more than ever before. These insights and best practices are drawn from around 10 million outreach sequences, sent from June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022. They cover:

- **The ideal number of stages in an outreach sequence, along with average reply and interested rates for each stage**

- **Best practices for sequence cadence**

- **The most successful personalization tokens for email subject lines, along with subject line best practices and examples of our customers' best-performing subject lines**

As the trend of talent voluntarily quitting their jobs for better opportunities elsewhere continues, it seems the talent shortage is here to stay. Freezes and layoffs may be happening, but many roles remain competitive. We've republished "The definitive guide for recruiting email outreach" at a time when outreach to passive talent—and the employer branding efforts it sustains—means more than ever before.

- **When to send messages on behalf of hiring managers and executives for better open and reply rates**

- **The best (and worst!) send times, broken down by day-of-week, hour-of-day, tech vs. non-tech, and more granularly by role**

- **Best practices for message length and content, along with the words most often used in outreach that elicits responses**

Diversity outreach benchmarks—as a way of keeping your team thoughtful about *whom* it's reaching out to to fill those pipelines

We also offer plenty of examples of recruiting outreach, along with insights from leading-edge talent acquisition professionals on their most effective messaging practices.

If it's up to us at Gem, every talent team will soon be internally equipped to discover its own best practices and start standing out in prospects' inboxes. In the meantime, we'll keep updating "The definitive guide for recruiting email outreach" to help you understand what kinds of messages are statistically more likely to resonate with your prospects.

Here's to joy and curiosity in your messaging journey.

Gem's insights & best practices are drawn from ~10 million outreach sequences, sent from June 1, 2021 to May 31, 2022

Recruiting in 2022 by the numbers

80%
of separations are now
initiated by employees
source

4.4 million
people quit their jobs in April and
another 4.3 million quit in May
source 1, source 2

1 in 5
workers still intends
to quit this year
source

11.4
The U.S. saw 11.4 million job
openings posted in April and
another 11.25 million in May
source 1, source 2

58%
Employers are only managing
to fill 58% of job openings in a
given month
source

52%
of talent acquisition leaders
say they see the most qualified
candidates through sourcing
source

49%
of talent leaders cite sourcing
as one of their team's biggest
challenges
source

63%
of talent leaders say they're
investing in sourcing tools and
tech in 2022
source

5x
Sourced candidates are 5x more
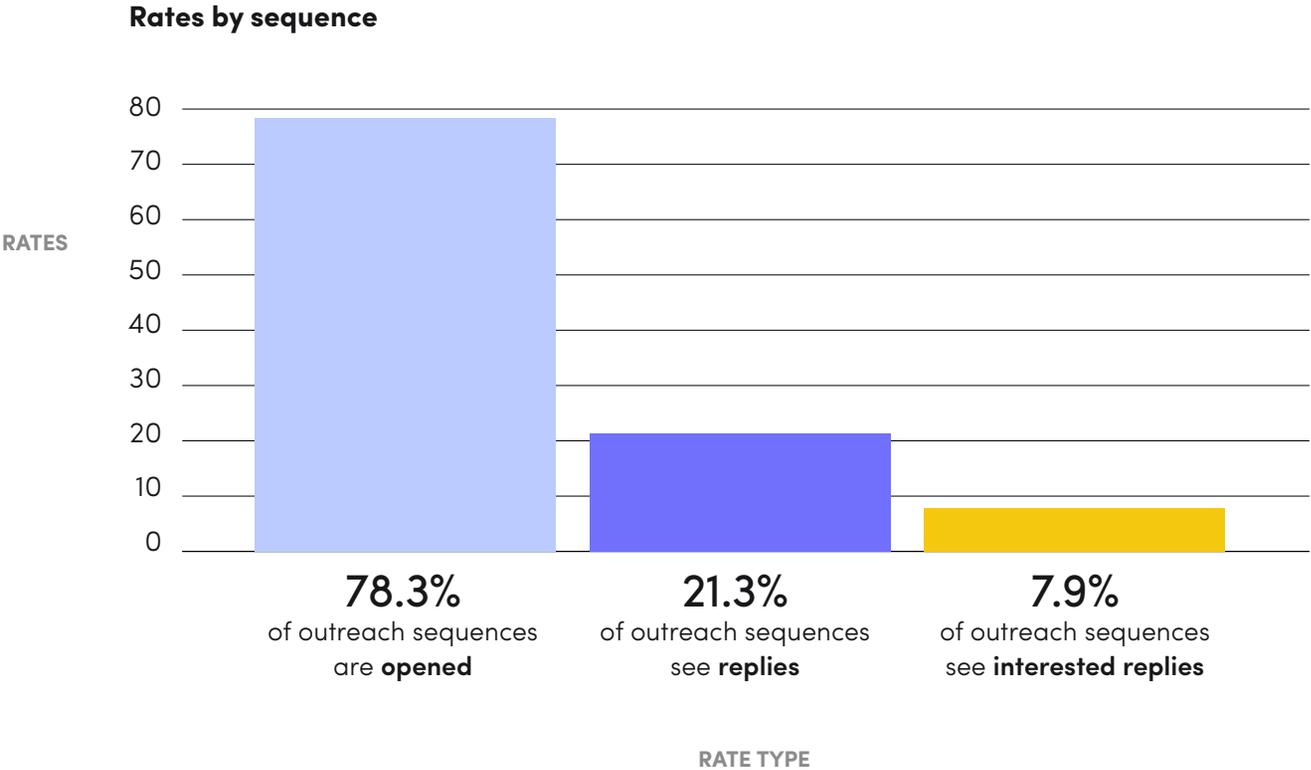likely to be hired than inbound
candidates are
source

121
Your prospective candidates
are receiving as many as 121
emails a day
source

Benchmarks

Data from around 10 million prospect outreach campaigns shows prospects responding to recruiter emails at the following rates:

Rates by sequence

RATES

78.3%	**21.3%**	**7.9%**
of outreach sequences are **opened**	of outreach sequences see **replies**	of outreach sequences see **interested replies**

RATE TYPE

Number of stages in an email sequence

1

The **first** email sees a

61.4% open rate
8.3% reply rate
3.9% interested rate

2

By the **second** email, most sequences have cumulatively seen a

73.5% open rate
15.8% reply rate
6.2% interested rate

3

By the **third** email, most sequences have cumulatively seen a

77.4% open rate
20.2% reply rate
7.5% interested rate

4

By the **fourth** email, most sequences have cumlatively seen a

78.2% open rate
21.2% reply rate
7.9% interested rate

4

By the **fifth** email, most sequences have cumulatively seen a
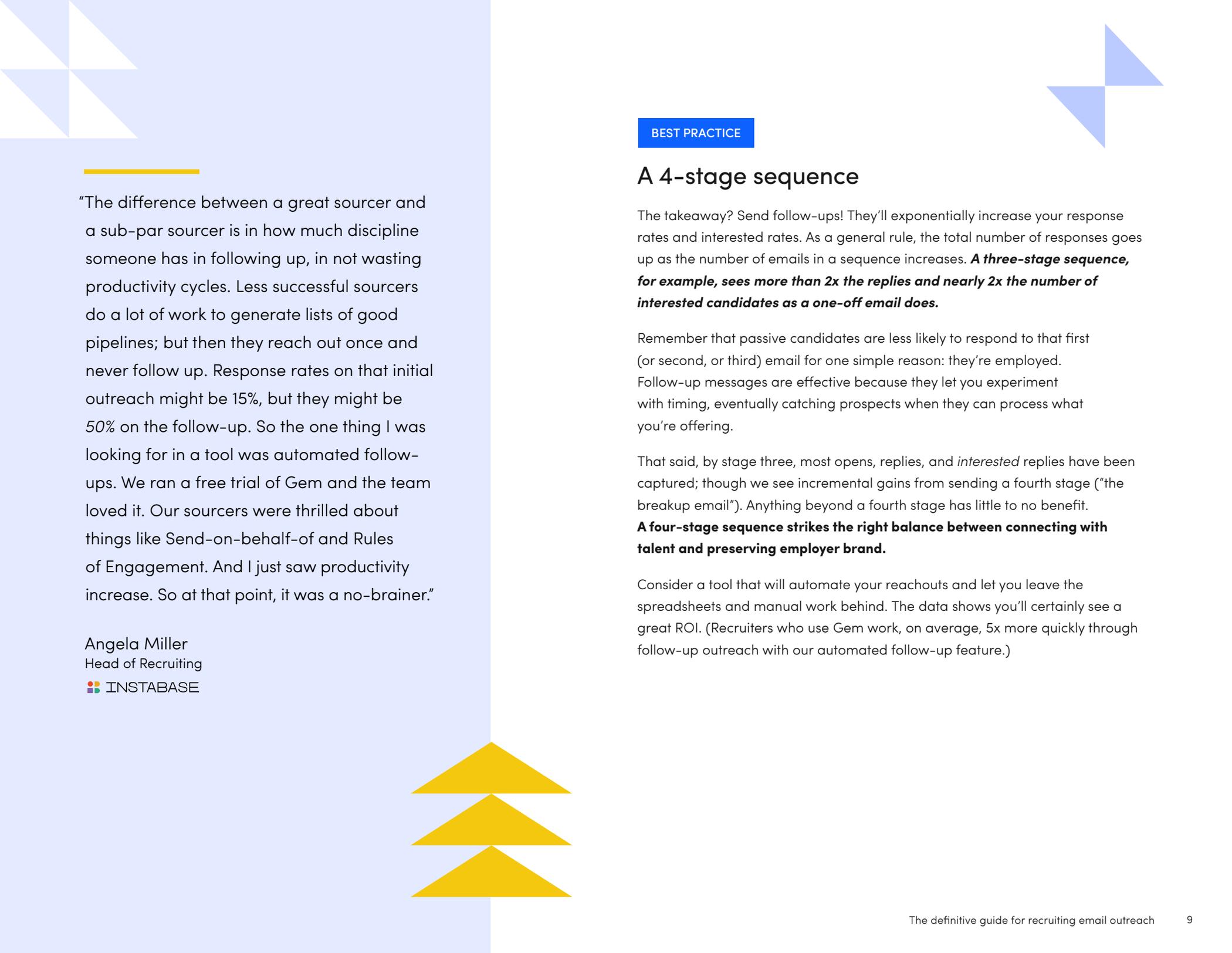
78.3% open rate
21.3% reply rate
7.9% interested rate

Rates by sequence

The data points completely flatten after Stage 5: any sequence of 6 or more
stages *still* sees a 78.3% open rate, a 21.3% reply rate, and a 7.9% interested rate.

Cumulative open, reply, and interested rates by sequence number

RATE TYPE

● OPEN RATE

● REPLY RATE

● INTERESTED RATE
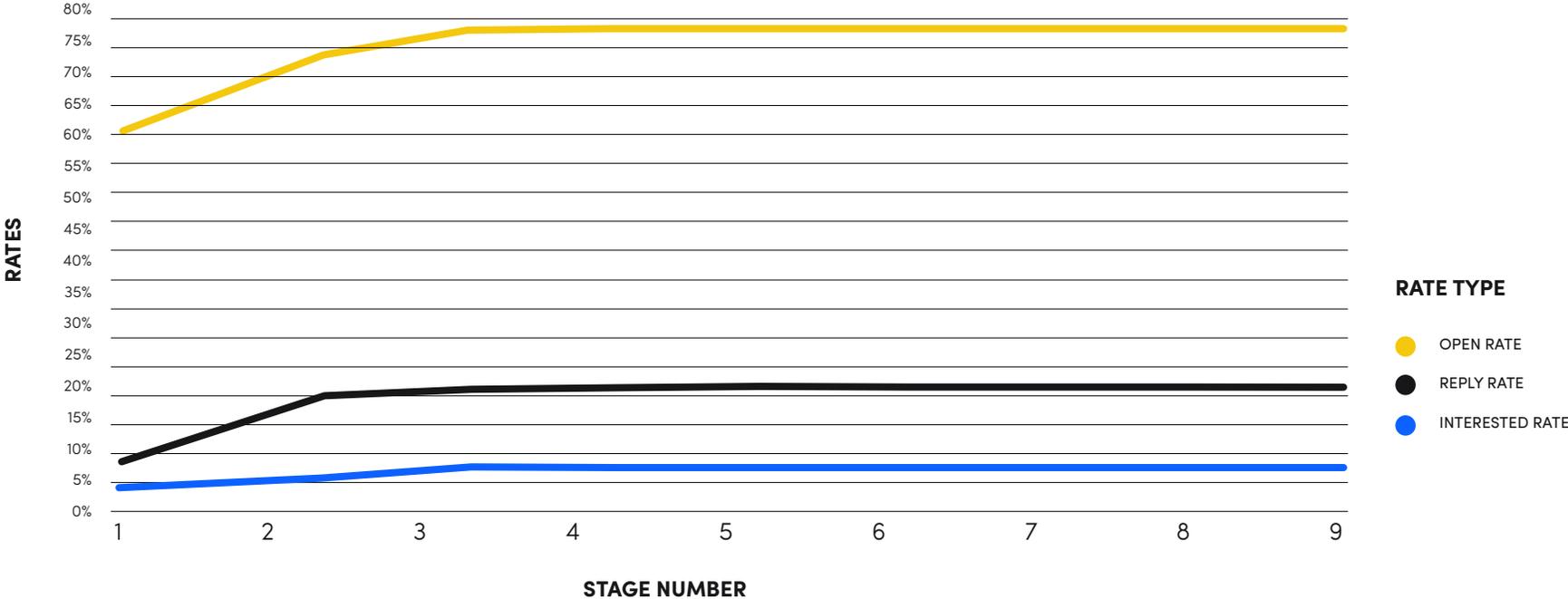
"The difference between a great sourcer and a sub-par sourcer is in how much discipline someone has in following up, in not wasting productivity cycles. Less successful sourcers do a lot of work to generate lists of good pipelines; but then they reach out once and never follow up. Response rates on that initial outreach might be 15%, but they might be *50%* on the follow-up. So the one thing I was looking for in a tool was automated follow-ups. We ran a free trial of Gem and the team loved it. Our sourcers were thrilled about things like Send-on-behalf-of and Rules of Engagement. And I just saw productivity increase. So at that point, it was a no-brainer."

Angela Miller
Head of Recruiting
:: INSTABASE

A 4-stage sequence

The takeaway? Send follow-ups! They'll exponentially increase your response rates and interested rates. As a general rule, the total number of responses goes up as the number of emails in a sequence increases. *A three-stage sequence, for example, sees more than 2x the replies and nearly 2x the number of interested candidates as a one-off email does.*

Remember that passive candidates are less likely to respond to that first (or second, or third) email for one simple reason: they're employed. Follow-up messages are effective because they let you experiment with timing, eventually catching prospects when they can process what you're offering.

That said, by stage three, most opens, replies, and *interested* replies have been captured; though we see incremental gains from sending a fourth stage ("the breakup email"). Anything beyond a fourth stage has little to no benefit. **A four-stage sequence strikes the right balance between connecting with talent and preserving employer brand.**

Consider a tool that will automate your reachouts and let you leave the spreadsheets and manual work behind. The data shows you'll certainly see a great ROI. (Recruiters who use Gem work, on average, 5x more quickly through follow-up outreach with our automated follow-up feature.)

Long-term nurture *after* the initial sequence

At Gem we also recommend a long-term nurture mindset, and here's why: your initial outreach sequence catches talent in a very specific 2-to-3-week window of their lives, in which any number of things could be going on for them. But we're creatures of transition; and if your first outreach doesn't catch talent precisely when they're ready to make a move, that doesn't mean they won't be ready 4, 6, or 9 months down the line.

The aggregate benchmark data above (see p. 6) confirms this: 21.3% of sequences see replies, but only 7.9% of sequences see interested replies. In other words, around 14% of replies are of the "thanks, but no thanks" or "thanks, but not yet" type. This doesn't foreclose future conversations.

So give prospective candidates some space after that initial outreach sequence, then continue to send emails with company updates a few times a year. This will ensure your org is top-of-mind when talent is ready to make a move.

"We built nurture campaigns with emails along the lines of: *Hey, it's been awhile; I'd love to reconnect. Here's the latest on Mapbox; check out our ERG spotlights.* So much happens in the months between reachouts that you lose context. Gem's Activity Feed offers a bird's-eye view of our history with a prospect; often it's enough to base my re-engagement on. I'll also schedule a follow-up email to go out at a later date the moment I get off the phone with a stellar candidate. Do they have a new addition to the family and so can't make any major life changes right now? I'll craft an email to go out in four months that says: *I hope your new baby is healthy and well.* This humanizes the process; it makes talent feel heard and their lives respected."

Brie Bastidas
Head of Technical Recruiting (formerly @ Mapbox)

scale

"Nurturing is great behavior that I feel is overlooked in our industry. Gem has been a huge part of cultivating that for me. A lot of people send out three messages in their little drip campaign, and that's it. But I believe wholeheartedly that this is a long-term relationship whether they're responding to you or not; you've got to keep cultivating it."

Aaron Smith
Lead Technical Recruiter

Persona
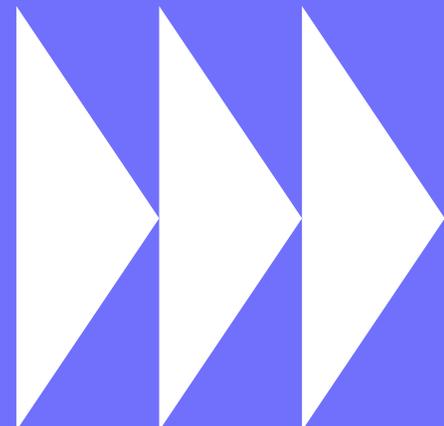
Spacing sequence cadence

Our data shows that outreach cadence has remained fairly consistent over the last few years: sourcers most often allow 6 days between emails 1 and 2, and another 6 days between emails 2 and 3 (in 2021 it was a 5-6 cadence, in 2020 a 6-6 cadence). We suspect this cadence is so often used because it leads to email delivery on a different day of the week throughout the sequence, and because it gives talent time between stages to consider the opportunity that's being offered.
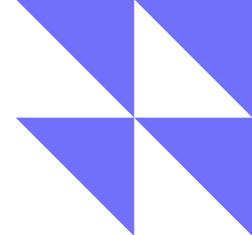
Indeed, we see some of the highest *reply* rates when there are 6 days between stages 1 and 2 (9.1% replied), and 5 days between stages 2 and 3 (7.8% replied).

That said, *open* rates are highest when the sourcer or recruiter instills a sense of urgency by only waiting a day between sends. When recruiters send stage 2 the day after stage 1, those emails see a 15.1% open rate; and when recruiters send stage 3 the day after stage 2, those emails see a 7.3% open rate.

Interested rates are highest when there are 6 days (3.4% interested) between stages 1 and 2, and 6 days (2.5% interested) between stages 2 and 3.

We see a similar pattern with staffing agencies: the highest open rates occur with outreach that's sent just one day after the previous message, but the highest *interested* rates happen on day 6.

Open rates are highest when the sourcer or recruiter instills a sense of urgency by only waiting a day between sends; but reply and interested rates tend to be highest when nearly a week passes between sends—perhaps because it gives talent time to consider the opportunity.

Gem

In-house outreach

TIME BETWEEN STAGES 1 & 2:	TIME BETWEEN STAGES 3 & 4:
1 day **15.1% open rate** **8.8%** reply rate **3.3%** interested rate	**1 day** **7.3% open rate** **6.7%** reply rate **1.9%** interested rate
2 days **14.6%** open rate **9.0%** reply rate **3.0%** interested rate	**2 days** **5.8%** open rate **7.5%** reply rate **2.4%** interested rate
3 days **13.4%** open rate **8.5%** reply rate **3.0%** interested rate	**3 days** **5.9%** open rate **7.6%** reply rate 2.1% interested rate
4 days **13.4%** open rate **8.7%** reply rate **3.1%** interested rate	**4 days** **5.7%** open rate **7.1%** reply rate **2.3%** interested rate
5 days **13.4%** open rate **8.3%** reply rate **3.0%** interested rate	**5 days** **5.8%** open rate **7.8%** reply rate **2.2%** interested rate
6 days **12.7%** open rate **9.1% reply rate** **3.4% interested rate**	**6 days** **5.4%** open rate **7.4%** reply rate **2.5% interested rate**

Staffing outreach

| TIME BETWEEN STAGES 1 & 2:	TIME BETWEEN STAGES 3 & 4:
1 day **17.6% open rate** **15.9% reply rate** **1.6%** interested rate	**1 day** **7.3% open rate** **5.6%** reply rate **1.0%** interested rate
2 days **15.3%** open rate **9.6%** reply rate **1.7%** interested rate	**2 days** **6.4%** open rate **5.5%** reply rate **1.5%** interested rate
3 days **15.9%** open rate **9.0%** reply rate **1.5%** interested rate	**3 days** **6.2%** open rate **4.6%** reply rate **1.1%** interested rate
4 days **14.6%** open rate **8.3%** reply rate **1.9%** interested rate	**4 days** **6.2%** open rate **5.2%** reply rate **1.3%** interested rate
5 days **14.5%** open rate **7.8%** reply rate **1.9%** interested rate	**5 days** **6.4%** open rate **5.3%** reply rate **1.5%** interested rate
6 days **14.5%** open rate **7.6%** reply rate **2.1% interested rate**	**6 days** **5.8%** open rate **5.9% reply rate** **1.6%** interested rate

The average number of days that pass between stage 1 and stage 4 is 19 (the median is 15), meaning that a typical email outreach sequence for Gem's customers keeps them top-of-mind with talent for around 2.5 weeks.

"One pattern our team at Dropbox observed is that six days was a bit of a magic number when it came to email outreach cadence. It meant we were always catching the prospect on a different day of the week, which increased our chances of eventually hearing back from them. It also meant we were allowing enough breathing space between touches to give the prospect time to turn over what we were offering."

Mike Moriarty
Operating Partner, Talent

‖ ☰ Human Capital
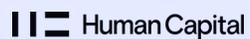
"Our cadence tends to vary depending on the client and whether we have access to internal email. Typically we'll send the first message in the afternoon (Mon–Thurs), the second 2–3 days later, the third about four days after that, and a fourth about a week or so later. As of late, given the urgency the market is creating, our sequences have been quick to roll out: 2 weeks or so."

Alyssa Garrison
Co-Founder

techmate talent

Experiment with 1 and 6 days

Our takeaway from the above data? When experimenting with cadence, try 1 OR 6 days between stages 1 and 2, and again between stages 2 and 3. 1 day will instill a sense of urgency and/or excitement, and is likely to see the highest open rates; while 6 days gives prospective candidates time to contemplate your offer, and is likely to see the highest interested rates.

Remember, there are two types of cadence: send cadence (delivery timing, the data on which we've been discussing) and conversational cadence (the rate at which you move your messaging forward—we'll have more to say about this when it comes to message length!). Take both into account with every email
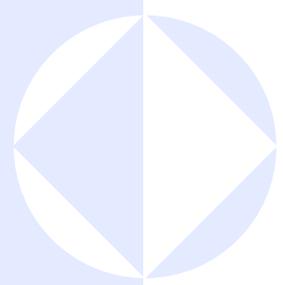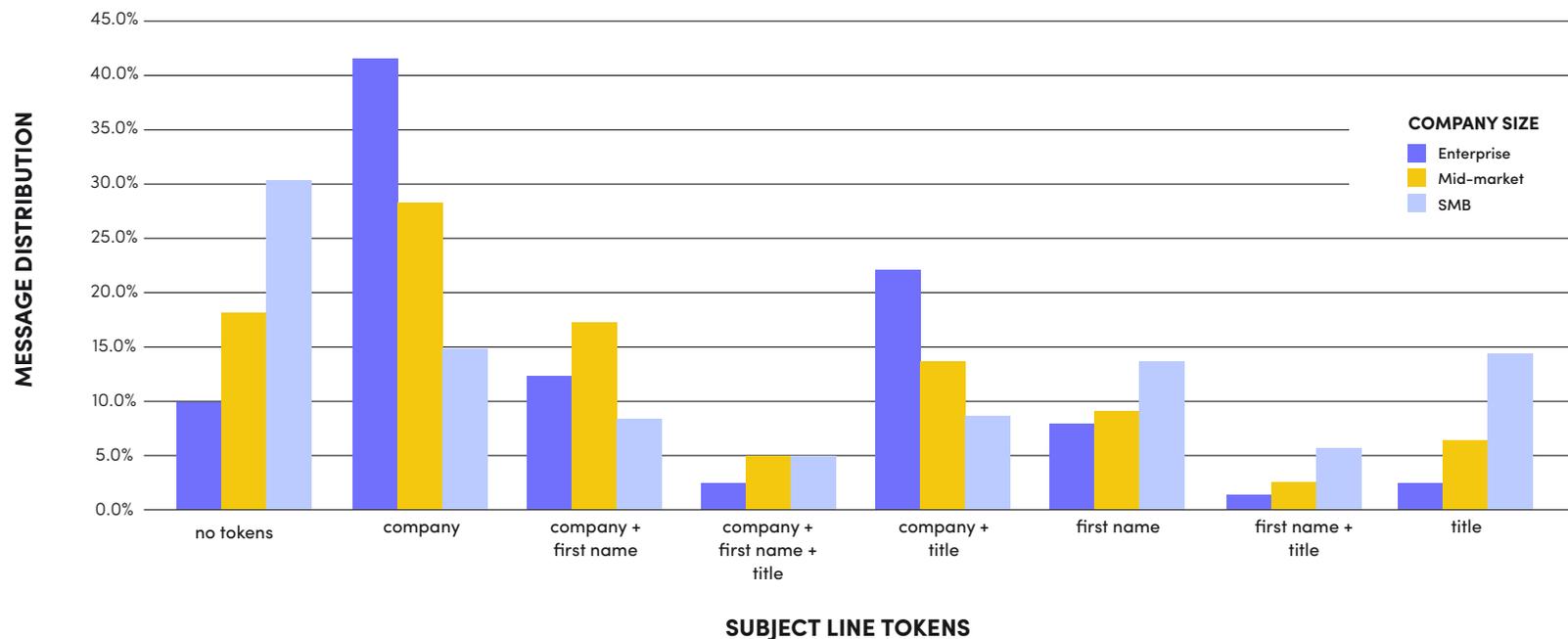
Subject lines

Naturally, there's a direct correlation between subject lines and open rates. For best practices on this outreach element, we pulled data on our customers' token usage, then combed through millions of subject lines and observed the characteristics of those that saw the highest open rates.

Gem's tokens represent values that are either auto-captured from the prospect's LinkedIn (or GitHub, or SeekOut, etc.) profile (i.e. {{company}}) or manually entered by a sourcer (i.e. {{reason}}). These variables can be dropped anywhere in subject lines or message copy when the sourcer is creating the email sequence. The value will automatically populate the email, replacing the token when the outreach is sent. In short, tokens offer the best of both worlds: personalization and automation.
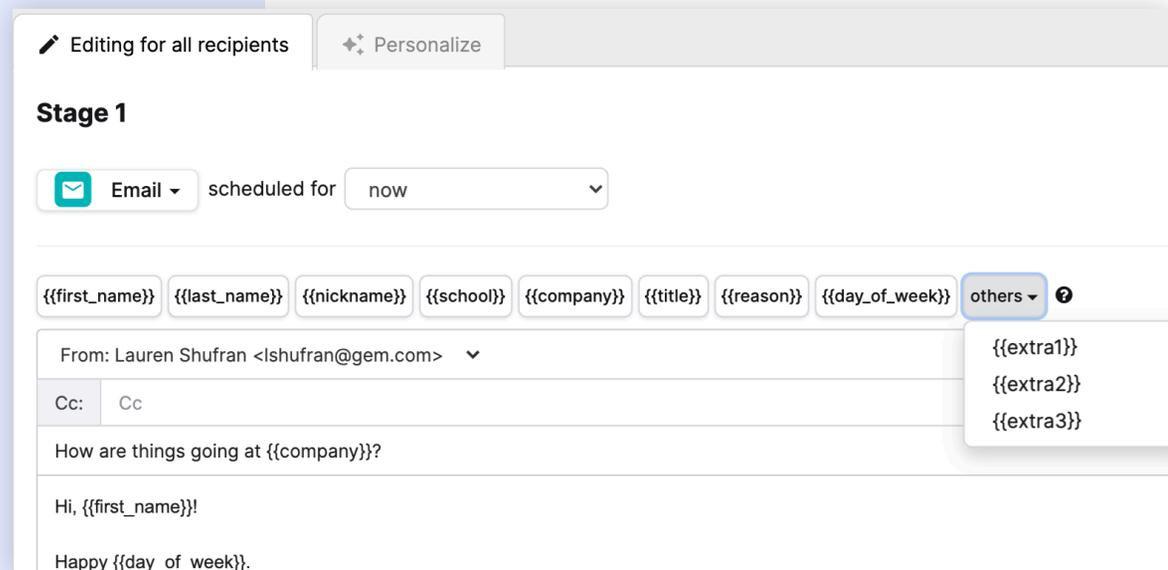
# Token usage among Gem's customers, by company size

This year we pulled data on the tokens that are most used in subject lines, splitting it out by company size. We noted some clear differences between how smaller companies and larger companies approach subject lines:

The larger the company, the more likely sourcers and recruiters are to include the company name in the subject line. From a brand awareness perspective, this would make logical sense.

Smaller companies, on the other hand, are more likely to rely on the prospect's first name or job title in the subject line as a way of attracting their interest.

Overall, SMBs are also the most likely *not* to include any tokens in their email outreach.
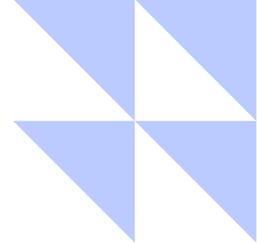
Token usage as a factor of open rates by company size

Interestingly, what recruiters *think* is a best practice for subject lines isn't always so. Here's what the data shows:

SMB

TOKEN	OPEN
company + title	63.7%
title	63.4%
company	62.9%
no token	62.2%
company + first_name	61.8%
first_name + title	61.6%
company + first_name + title	61.6%
first_name	61.3%

Mid-market

TOKEN	OPEN
company + first_name	66.5%
first_name	64.9%
title	64.8%
first_name + title	64.6%
company	63.6%
no token	62.9%
company + title	62.7%
company + first_name	62.5%

Enterprise

TOKEN	OPEN
first_name + title	68.4%
company + first_name	68.0%
company + first_name + title	66.9%
company	66.4%
no token	65.0%
title	65.0%
first_name	61.8%
company + title	61.8%

For SMBs, subject lines that include both {{company}} and {{title}} tokens see the highest open rates (63.7%), with {{title}} coming in a close second (63.4%).

For Mid-market organizations, subject lines that include both {{company}} and {{first name}} tokens see the highest open rates (66.5%).
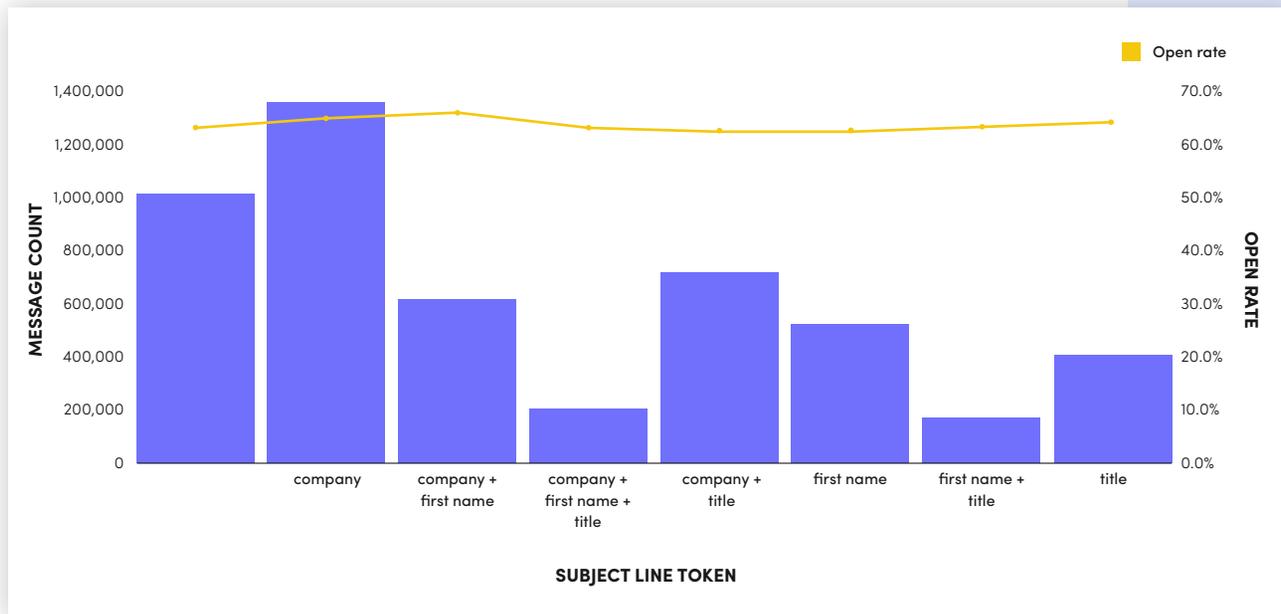
For Enterprise organizations, subject lines that include both {{first name}} and {{title}} tokens see the highest open rates (68.4%), with a {{company}} and {{first name}} combination coming in a close second (68.0%).*

* Due to low sample sizes, this high percentage may not hold as more emails with this token combination are sent.

Token usage as a factor of open rates, in aggregate

{{company}} + {{first name}}:
65.8% open rate

{{company}}:
64.8% open rate

{{title}}:
63.9% open rate

{{first name}} + {{title}}:
63.2% open rate

{{company}} + {{first name}} +
{{title}}:
63.0% open rate

No token:
62.8% open rate

{{company}} + {{title}}:
62.5% open rate

{{first name}}:
62.5% open rate

Subject lines

Personalize!

Based on Gem's open rate data, teams should generally include at least one token in their subject lines. It can make a *nearly 5%* (4.8%) difference in open rates, and which tokens work best for you will be well worth testing. Prospects have years' worth of digital footprints trailing them. Do your due diligence and research them—on LinkedIn, Twitter, GitHub, Medium, and elsewhere. Then drive opens with a personalization token—or if you don't use Gem, a manually-personalized subject line.

From: maggie@gem.com

Are you ready to be a founding Demo Engineer @ Gem?

Hi {{first_name}},

I'm Maggie, a recruiter at Gem. I'm excited to announce that we're hiring our very first Demo Engineer! This is a high-impact role where you will help us up-level our ability to consistently tell valuable outcome-based stories across our field sales team, and help us change the recruiting technology industry forever. Your experience with {{company}} is extremely strong and it also looks like you have experience with SQL and data architecture!

Personalized subject lines can make a nearly **5%** difference in open rates. A/B test subject line tokens to determine which work best for your own outreach.

If you're a Gem user, we recommend a short token in the subject line (see the previous pages for what's worked best over the last 12 months), and a longer {{reason}} token in the body copy: a recent success, a blog post they wrote, how their recent GitHub project aligns with what your eng team is working on, an interest that would make them a great add to your company culture or a career aspiration they appear to have... whatever might inspire them to respond.

Smaller companies: don't be afraid to name your organization

While recruiters at smaller organizations are less likely to use {{company}} tokens in their subject lines, the data shows that subject lines with company names do well—especially when accompanied by a {{title}} token.

Use outreach stats to inform your subject lines

If it's worked before, it'll likely work again. Dig into your own data and see what's most resonated with prospective candidates in the past—whether for yourself or for teammates in your org. In Gem, it's as simple as filtering sequences to those with the highest open rates, and discovering your own best practices from there.

All recipients ▾	All stages ▾					
Recipients	Bounced (1)	Opened (38)	Clicked (14)	Replied (8)	Interested (3)	Converted (2)
43	2%	88%	33%	19%	7%	5%

Our customers' best-performing subject lines*

Here are some subject lines with open rates of greater than 90%:

Flexible Technical Work

{first_name} + {company} = Leadership Opportunity

{company} – An exciting new job opportunity for you!

{first_name}, {company} is Officially a FinTech Unicorn
and We Still Need More Top {title} Talent

{company}: Technical {title} opportunity

{company} in the News!

{first_name}, iOS tech leadership @ {company}

We're nearing the finish line, {first_name} {last_name}!

Remote Talented Ruby on Rails {title} Opportunity at {company}

Senior Frontend {title} @ 🗑️ Come to the Dark Side

{first_name}, how's {company} life?

Executive Search – Director, Finance & Administration
(Reporting to COO)

{company}: {title} a Virtual Economy

{company} wants you on the team!

VP of {title} Opportunity at {company}!

Ahoy from {company} New Grad!

{company} Leadership Role x {first_name}

{first_name}, Get in early at {company} (Remote-First Company)!

Interested in amazing growth and scale?

Hi from {company} :)

Hi {first_name}; What's next after {company}?

{first_name} x {company} role – Up for a call? ➡️📱

{first_name}, Hello from {company}

Hello👋 {first_name}!

{first_name}, {company} just raised our Series B, join us!

At least 200 messages with the subject line had to be sent to qualify.

"I get as creative as possible with my emails, especially with compelling subject lines—things that capture people. Personally I enjoy food puns. So I'll say something like: Can I have a slice of your time? And I'll include a pizza emoji. And as a follow up, I'll say: Come on, use your noodle, and include a bowl of noodles. Of course, these things are always persona-specific, but food puns seem to work really well with engineers!"

Joe Pecci
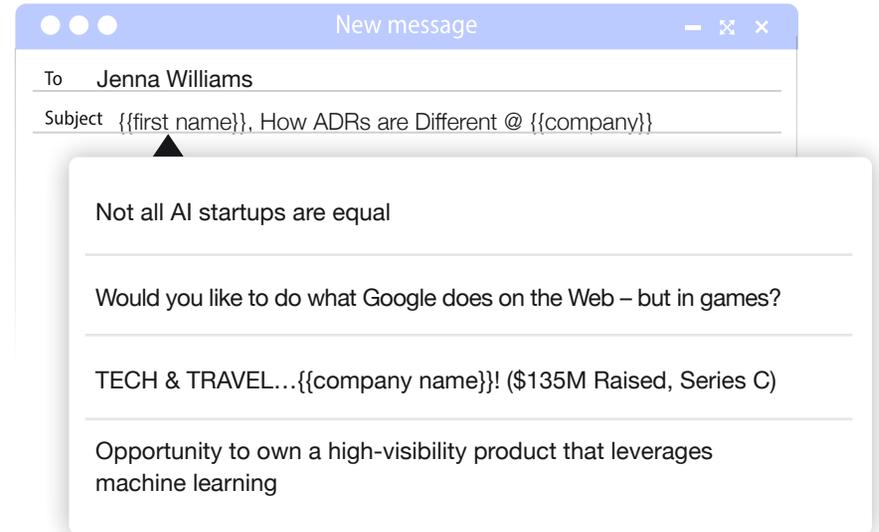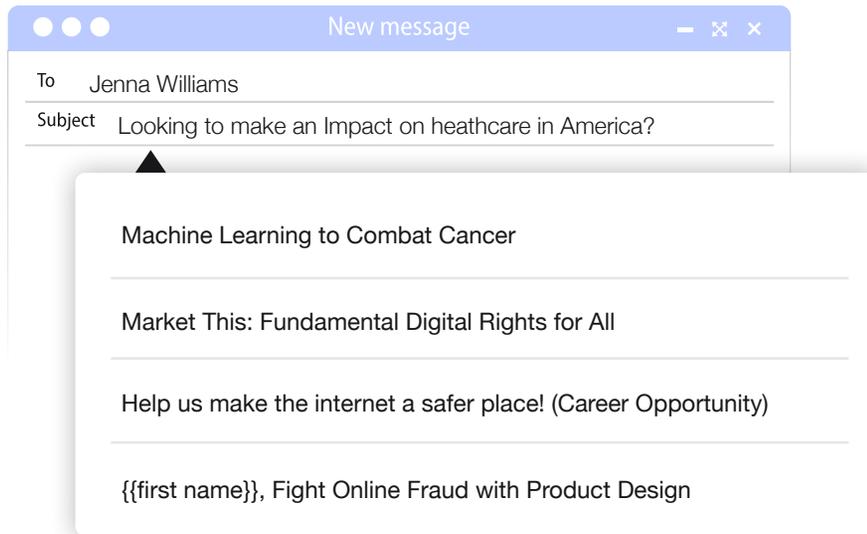Senior Manager of Engineering
Recruiting

YEXT
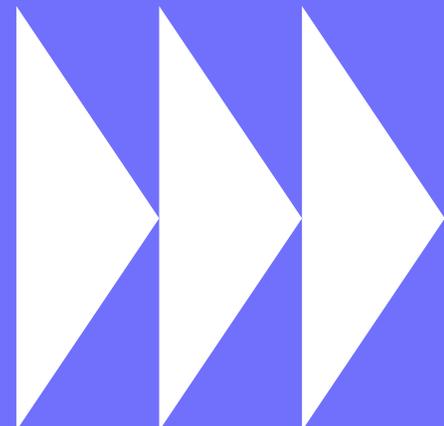
Subject line strategies to experiment with

Hopefully as you read the best-performing subject lines above, you considered what made each of them compelling to their recipients. Here are some strategies—many of them inferred directly from the above examples—that are worth testing:

Appealing to values

Passive talent may be checking their email in sprint-mode; but their hearts go with them even as they scan their inboxes. Think about "the greater good" your company is ultimately trying to offer, the demographic it most wants to support, or the values and causes it hopes to honor. Talent for whom these subject lines resonate will opt in because they're in alignment with your mission and vision—which means a more likely values-fit when they've signed that offer letter.

New message — ⤢ ✕

To   Jenna Williams

Subject   Looking to make an Impact on heathcare in America?

Machine Learning to Combat Cancer

Market This: Fundamental Digital Rights for All

Help us make the internet a safer place! (Career Opportunity)

{{first name}}, Fight Online Fraud with Product Design

New message — ⤢ ✕

To   Jenna Williams

Subject   {{first name}}, How ADRs are Different @ {{company}}

Not all AI startups are equal

Would you like to do what Google does on the Web – but in games?

TECH & TRAVEL…{{company name}}! ($135M Raised, Series C)

Opportunity to own a high-visibility product that leverages machine learning

Appealing to curiosity

The prospects you're reaching out to are top professionals and problem-solvers in their fields: they *already* possess an instinct for inquiry. In the context of talent outreach, let's define curiosity as the urge to understand "language events" (subject lines) that are ambiguous, uncertain, or partial. Curiosity is one of the most influential drivers of human behavior—in this case, email opens. That's because it releases dopamine, a chemical associated with motivation. Consider the questions the subject lines above invoke.

New message

To: Jenna Williams

Subject: Re: Build a Marketing team from scratch!!
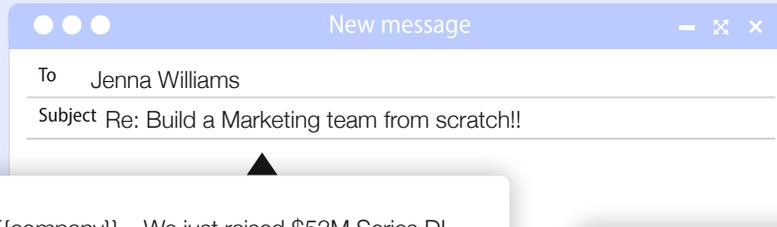
Lead the Toronto office of {{company}} – We just raised $53M Series D!

Help define an industry! Hiring our first Sr. Front End Engineers

Hi {{first_name}}, secure the infrastructure that powers 90% of fintech?

{{first name}}, come disrupt the cloud testing space!

Want to join the next unicorn?

What's the next design breakthrough in your career?

Ready to love coming to work every day?

Want to join THE fastest-growing travel company in Canada's history?

{{first_name}}, want to chat about the future of live entertainment?

Being verb-forward

If you'll allow us to state the obvious, action words *inspire action.* When prospects are presented with powerful verbs, they'll feel both implicitly challenged (in a good way!) and empowered. Verbs also help passive candidates better visualize what success could look like in that role you're offering. "Build," "lead," "define," "secure," "disrupt," and "reinvent" are among the more compelling verbs we've see talent teams use.

Questions

Questions place recipients in an instant dialogue with your email—even before they open it. Prospects will naturally pause and respond internally—and will then be lured in to find out (or be affirmed in) the answer.

Mutual connections

Mentioning mutual connections is a personalization strategy that functions as an immediate endorsement, evoking trust in the prospect. Passive candidates may not be interested in introducing risk into their lives with a career change—especially given current market conditions. Having a common connection—one who already works at your company—psychologically minimizes that risk.
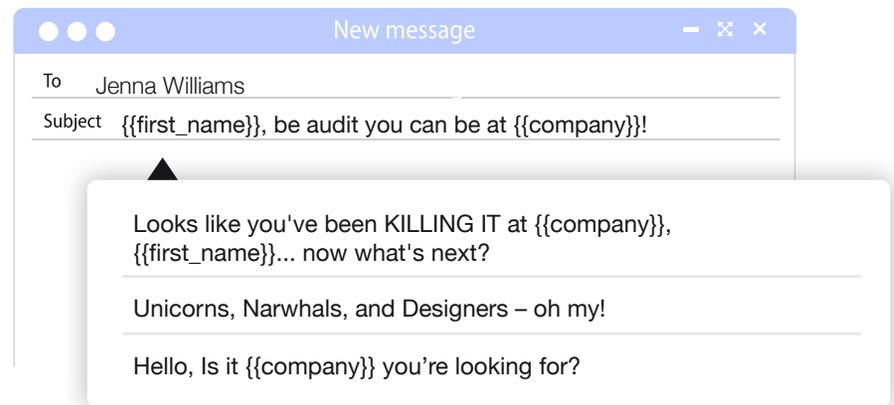
Flattery

Compliments trigger reward centers in the brain, which leave us wanting more of the resulting "mini-high." Prospects are likely to try to extend this feeling by clicking in. Note that flattering the egos of prospects' *future* selves ("come be our expert") can be as impactful as flattering their *current* selves.
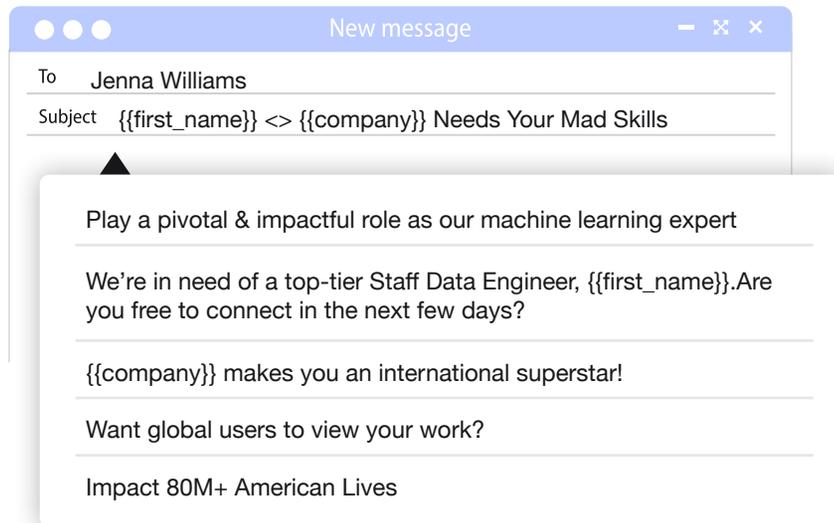
Personality

Of course, how *much* personality you inject into prospect outreach will hinge on your overall brand personality, not to mention what you know about your prospective candidates. But if it fits your company style, a little pun never hurt anyone—indeed, it probably only ever caught their attention. (Note the subject line that plays on the word "audit" below opened to an email about a Senior Accountant position.) Pop culture references, emojis, and humor of all kinds also fall into this category. Experiment with these as you see fit.

New message

To   Jenna Williams

Subject   {{first_name}}, be audit you can be at {{company}}!

Looks like you've been KILLING IT at {{company}}, {{first_name}}... now what's next?

Unicorns, Narwhals, and Designers – oh my!

Hello, Is it {{company}} you're looking for?

New message

To   Jenna Williams

Subject   {{first_name}} <> {{company}} Needs Your Mad Skills

Play a pivotal & impactful role as our machine learning expert

We're in need of a top-tier Staff Data Engineer, {{first_name}}. Are you free to connect in the next few days?

{{company}} makes you an international superstar!

Want global users to view your work?

Impact 80M+ American Lives

Brevity

Outreach coming out of enterprise organizations tends to have the shortest subject lines, while outreach from staffing companies tends to have the longest. That said, our data shows there isn't much of a correlation between subject line length and open rates beyond a slight downward trend as word count increases (shown by the purple line in the graph below), and a slight uptick in open rates for 4-word subject lines.

That said, depending on whom you ask, 42%, 47%, or more of email opens occur on mobile—and given what the data suggests about the effectiveness of Sunday outreach (see "Send Times" below), it's a safe bet that the majority of talent is seeing your message *first* on mobile. You may not want your subject line cut short on smaller devices. So test subject lines of up to 50 characters to determine "most effective length"—but our guess is that the language in your subject line will carry more significance than the length will.

Number of words in subject, and associated open rates

ALL SEGMENTS

Open rate
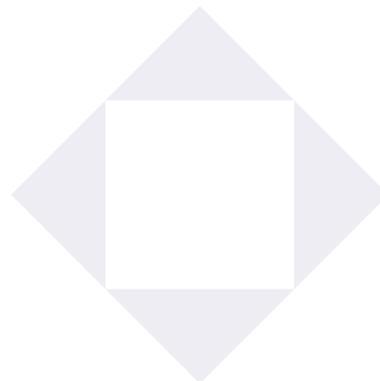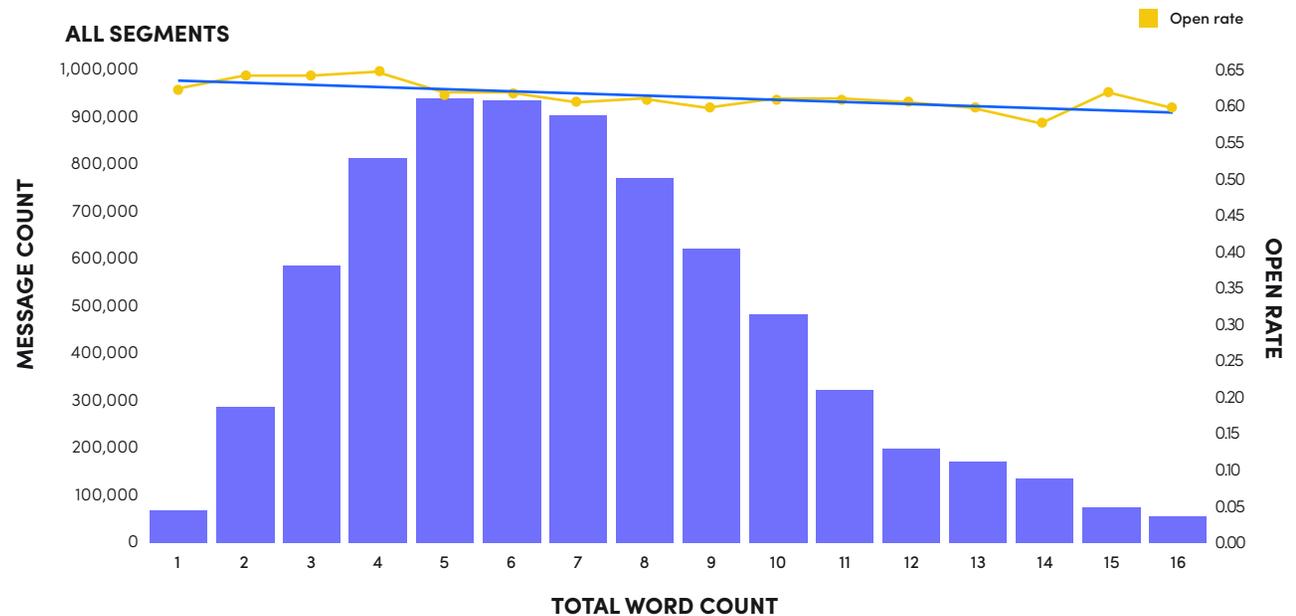
Maisha Cannon

Program manager, recruiting

ROBLOX

Inspiration can often come when you least expect it.

What do you get when you mix a Sourcer with 24+ months in quarantine and an increased appetite for streamed content? Five "quaran-stream"-inspired subject line strategies:

"Pretty, pretty, pretty good." *(Curb Your Enthusiasm)*

Acknowledge an accolade. Avoid the overused and generic, "I was impressed with your background." Instead, comment on a specific accomplishment you uncovered in your online research using Gem's social profile finder.

Example: Congrats on being Microsoft's 2021 Developer of the Year.

"Look at you quoting my quotes." *(Insecure)*

Lift the prospect's own words off of their social profile and place them strategically in your subject line or introduction sentence.

Example: Let's chat about the "human-centered design of data products..."

"I am Beyoncé, always." *(The Office)*

Embrace your inner magic and do what only you can do. The best outreach subject lines will always be uniquely you, drafted and crafted with the reader's interest in mind.

Example: From PhD in English Lit to Senior Content Strategist - Lauren, I want to write like you when I grow up!

"Survey says!" *(Family Feud)*

Referencing stats from useful annual data sets from StackOverflow and JetBrains can add an extra element of customization to in-demand tech professionals. This data is particularly helpful if your engineering tech stack is amongst the most popular.

Example: Are you in the 62% of engineers open to a remote Python role?

"Is that your final answer?" *(Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?)*

When sending a final follow-up, the breakup method can be effective in generating a reply. Keep it brief while letting the recipient know this is your last message. Gem's Send-of-behalf-of works well in this instance. Add value by including a relevant resource.

Example: I Guess It's Goodbye + A Parting Gift for You

Words most often used in top subject lines

The following cloud contains the words Gem's customers use in subject lines that see 80%+ open rates (note that {first_name}, {company_name}, and {title} are tokens that auto-populate when the message sends). A few trends we've noted (you might observe others):

Calling out funding/backers right away

("first round," "Series B," "Series C," "VC," "YC," "$200M," "raised," "funded," "venture," "pre-IPO")

Mentioning role/seniority

("Manager," "VP," "Executive," "leadership," "Senior," "CTO," "COO")

Leading with verbs

("start," "impact," "build," "scale," "help," "head," "grow," "join")

Invoking enthusiasm

("exciting," "growth," "future," "first," "early," "founding," "revenue," "unicorn," "pre-IPO," "strategic," "global," "flexible," "fully remote")
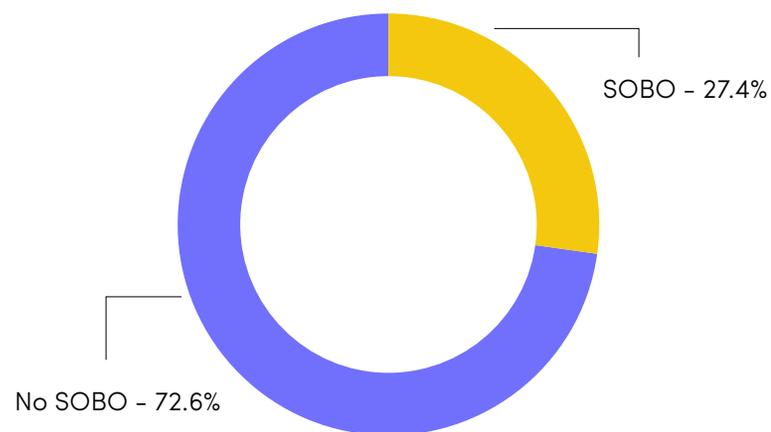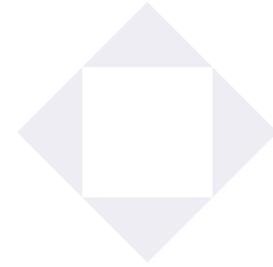
"From" names

Over 25% of outreach sequences sent through Gem contain a message sent on behalf of someone else. Our data shows that sending on behalf of (SOBO-ing) a hiring manager or executive in the company over the course of a sequence increases open and response rates. (In fact, some of our customers have seen tripled and quadrupled response rates with SOBO.)

With Gem, you can send on behalf of multiple teammates in the same sequence: stages 1 and 2 might come from the recruiter, stage 3 could come from the hiring manager, and stage 4 could come from the Director of Engineering, for example. The manager and director can decide whether they want the replies to come directly to *their* inboxes so they can personally continue the conversation, or to go back to the recruiter, who then stays in control of the correspondence.

Consider having the senders reference a conversation they had about the prospect in those messages to make it all the more personalized. *Now* you've got a very high-touch engagement strategy from multiple people. When prospective candidates feel there's a whole group that's excited about them, they'll be all the more likely to open and reply.
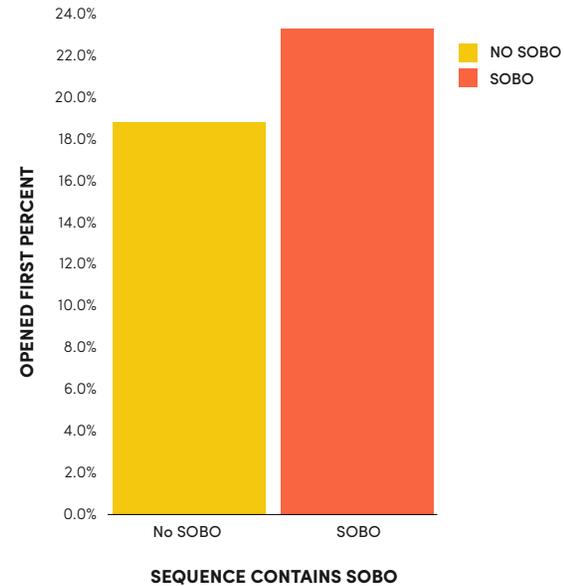
SOBO – 27.4%

No SOBO – 72.6%

"At Segment, we'd put extra time into partnering with our recruiting team to craft the right message and cadence for each role. By crafting tailored messages and reaching out from multiple senders at the leadership level, we saw 2x response rate for hard-to-fill roles."
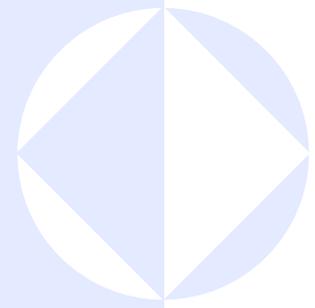
Albert Strasheim
CTO & SVP Engineering (formerly @ Segment)

׳׳׳ RIPPLING

"We use SOBO very intentionally for things like leadership hires and key individual contributors, and we take it seriously. With Gem, gone are the days of needing to ask senior leaders to send emails for us. The efficiency we've achieved with the SOBO feature is fantastic."

Joe Gillespie
Head of Technical Recruitment

Robinhood 🖋

"From" names

Vary your sender—*especially* for hard-to-fill roles

Our data shows that sequences with more than one sender *over time* see 24% higher open rates on average. (They also see higher response rates, as we'll see shortly.)

Stages 2–5 only, No SOBO vs. SOBO

Legend:
- NO SOBO
- SOBO

Y-axis: OPENED FIRST PERCENT (0.0% to 24.0%)
X-axis: SEQUENCE CONTAINS SOBO (No SOBO, SOBO)

Use SOBO *after* stage 1

The point of SOBO is to have the prospective candidate see that more than one person in the organization is interested in them and what they might bring to the role—which is why sequences that use a SOBO in the *very first* email see less success than those that wait until a later stage to invite a manager or exec into the conversation (reply rates are nearly 9% lower for first-email SOBOs).

Our data suggests that a best practice is to have *at least the first email* come from a recruiter, and to wait until the second email (or beyond) to send on behalf of a hiring manager or executive. The narrative this generates is that the recruiter is excited enough about them to have personally brought their name up to leadership. What's more, talent is more likely to respond when they know that more than one person—at least one of them in a high-level role—awaits a response.

Sequences that didn't get a response in Stage 1 saw a **25% increase** in open rates and a **13% increase** in reply rates when Stage 2 was sent on behalf of someone else*

Sequences that didn't get a response in Stages 1 and 2 saw a **57% increase** in open rates and a **39% increase** in reply rates when Stage 3 was sent on behalf of someone else

Sequences that didn't get a response in Stages 1, 2, and 3 saw a **57% increase** in open rates and a **16% increase** in reply rates when Stage 4 was sent on behalf of someone else

* Rates are calculated as opens and replies as a percentage of unique sequences (not messages) starting at Stage 2.

"At Mapbox, we were looking for a Data Roads Lead, which is super-niche domain expertise. To get a role like that filled we had to up our outreach game; so we used SOBO because conversion rates are typically higher on outreach sent from hiring managers. There were maybe 100 people globally that made sense for that job; our SOBO messages saw an 82% open rate and a 33% interested rate. Those were remarkable numbers."

Brie Bastidas
Head of Technical Recruiting (formerly at Mapbox)

scale

"It's important to me that this strategy is used sparingly; but when it's done well, SOBO is super advantageous. We use it for director and senior manager roles. And I'll typically personalize it. For example, I recently combed my network and gave a recruiter 20 or so referrals. And I was like, This person I met at a conference; this person I've had multiple conversations with; so when you reach out on behalf of me, please say *this*. When someone responds, I get a copy of that reply. And then I have a back-and-forth with them."

Arquay Harris
VP Engineering

webflow

Send times

When your outreach is competing with hundreds of emails for prospects' attention—and when passive talent doesn't have the luxury of carefully attending to every message they receive—you want to put your email in a position to get noticed. Great subject lines will get you great open rates, sure. But a subject line is only as great as it is visible. And this means getting it as close as possible to the top of prospects' inboxes.

Send times
Plan outreach based on minutes-to-open

50% of prospects will open your email within the first 41 minutes after send time—data that underscores the importance of catching passive talent at the right time. You'll want to send as close as possible to when prospects will be sitting down at their computers—or picking up their phones—to tackle email. (Naturally, mobile broadens your likelihood of catching talent shortly after send.)

Hours to open (first 48 hours)

Median hours to open:

0.6

Median hours to reply:

6.7
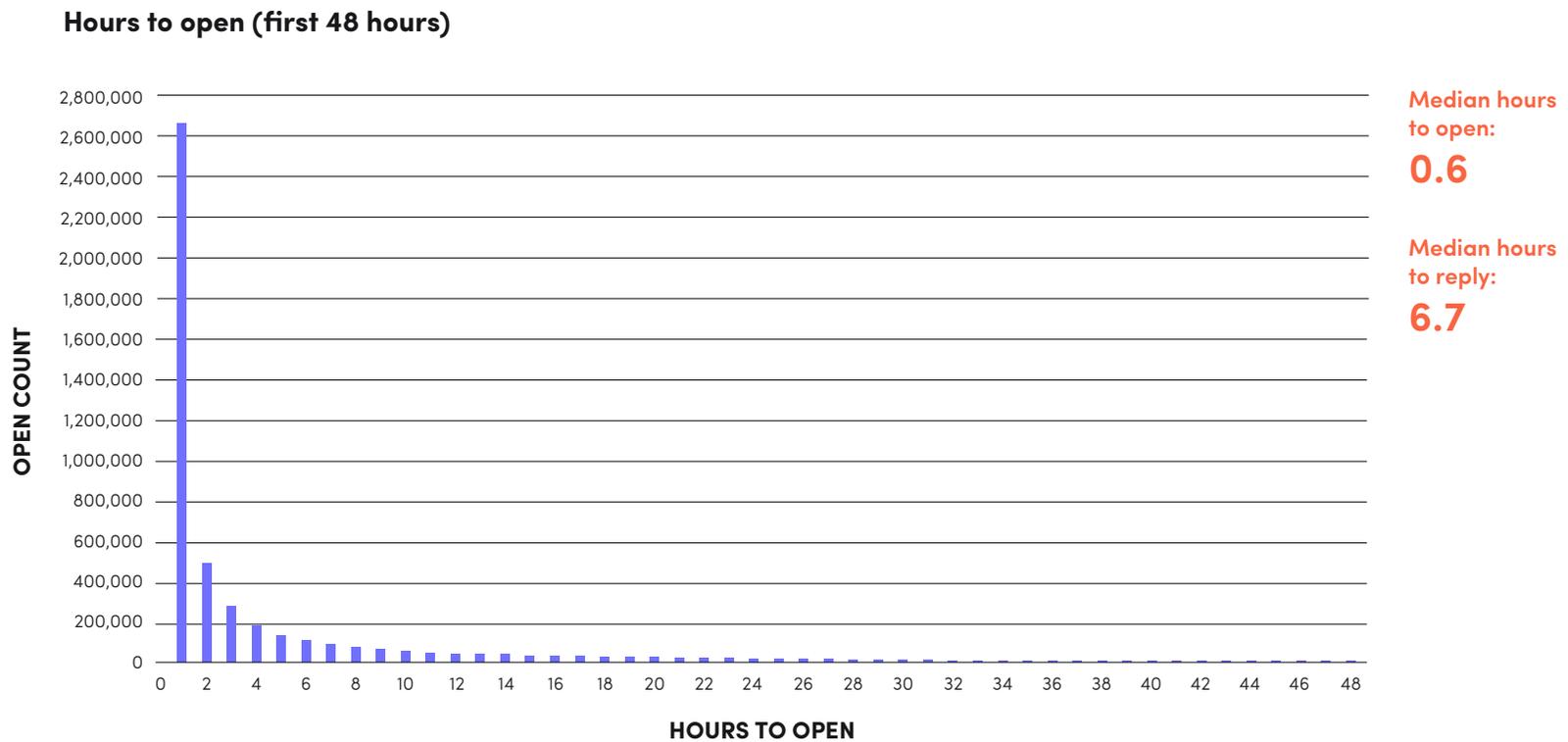
Replies as a function of opens over time

The below scatter plot shows the first 24 hours following an email send; the yellow line that passes through is the reply rate. Note that—for the first 8 hours after send—the sooner the email is opened, the more likely the prospect is to reply. Interestingly, reply rate as a percentage of opens goes up again as time goes on, but the data is also more dispersed. This is likely a function of when the email is sent. For example, if an email is sent in the morning during business hours, the recipient may open it, but may not reply until the end of the work day.
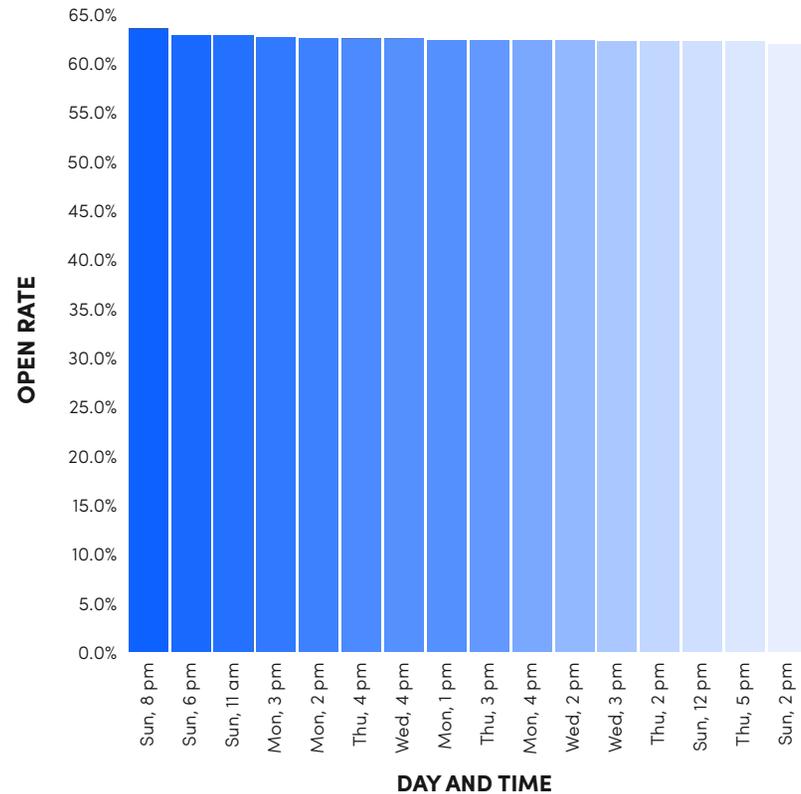
Replies over opens
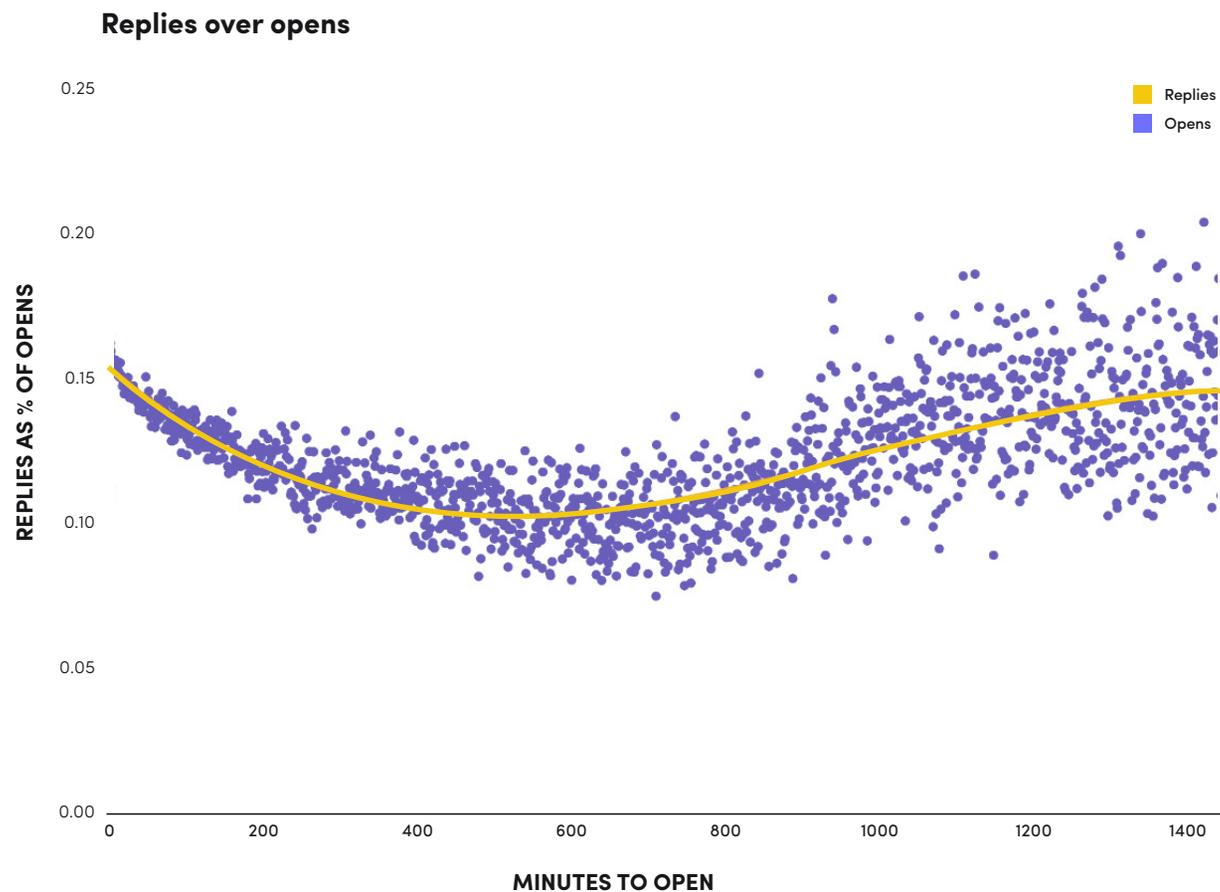
Consider Sunday sends

You'll discover the best window for your prospective candidates through testing, over time. In the meantime, what we've discovered at Gem is that Sunday outreach—particularly outreach sent Sundays at 8 pm, 6 pm, and 11 am—tends to do surprisingly well, seeing 63.9%, 63.5%, and 63.3% open rates, respectively. (Mondays between 2-3 pm and Wednesdays and Thursdays at 4 pm also see particularly high open rates.)*

That said, "best times" were more nuanced when we dug in by role. After all, different roles have different relationships to email; and it may be worth it to hypothesize why some of the following numbers are what they are. (For example, we imagine that weekdays—as opposed to Sundays—are likely great times for recruiting outreach because recruiters are already on email all day. They may be regularly switching between their work email and personal email to see what's happening there.)

Top times to send

Chart: Open Rate (y-axis) by Day and Time (x-axis). Categories: Sun, 8 pm; Sun, 6 pm; Sun, 11 am; Mon, 3 pm; Mon, 2 pm; Thu, 4 pm; Wed, 4 pm; Mon, 1 pm; Thu, 3 pm; Mon, 4 pm; Wed, 2 pm; Wed, 3 pm; Thu, 2 pm; Sun, 12 pm; Thu, 5 pm; Sun, 2 pm. All values approximately 62-64%.

* Data on send times—here and below—are limited to Stage 1.

Best (and worst) send times: tech v. non-tech

In aggregate, here are the top 5 days and times to send (and *not* to send!) outreach for tech and non-tech roles. (It's worth noting that outreach for tech roles tends to see overall better open rates than outreach for non-tech roles):
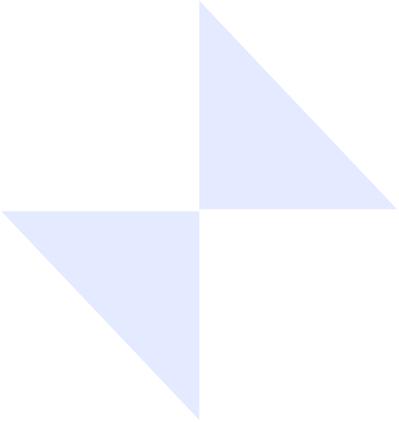
Best send times: tech roles

Sunday at 8 pm: 64.2% open rate
Sunday at 11 am: 63.9% open rate
Monday at 4 pm: 63.6% open rate
Sunday at 6 pm: 63.5% open rate
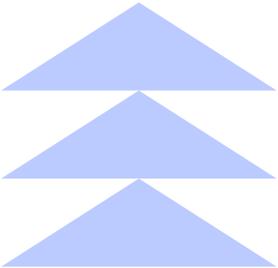Sunday at 3 pm: 63.4% open rate

Best send times: non-tech roles

Sunday at 6 pm: 63.4% open rate
Monday at 1 pm: 63.4% open rate
Sunday at 7 pm: 63.2% open rate
Monday at 2 pm: 63.0% open rate
Monday at 3 pm: 62.5% open rate

Worst send times: tech roles

Tuesday at 11 pm: 55.5% open rate
Thursday at 12 am: 55.9% open rate
Wednesday at 6 am: 56.9% open rate
Wednesday at 12 am: 57.3% open rate
Wednesday at 11 pm: 57.5% open rate

Worst send times: non-tech roles

Friday at 11 pm: 52.2% open rate
Wednesday at 12 am: 53.1% open rate
Friday at 10 pm: 53.1% open rate
Thursday at 11 am: 53.3% open rate
Saturday at 2 pm: 54.5% open rate

Best send days & times by role

Engineers

Sunday at 12 pm: 62.4% open rate
Sunday at 8 pm: 62.3% open rate
Sunday at 11 am: 62.2% open rate

Eng managers

Sunday at 11 am: 70.4% open rate
Sunday at 8 pm: 70.3% open rate
Sunday at 3 pm: 70.2% open rate

Biz dev*

Sunday at 8 pm: 70.7% open rate
Tuesday at 6 am: 70.4% open rate
Tuesday at 7 pm: 69.7% open rate

PMM*

Friday at 12 am: 81.2% open rate
Sunday at 4 pm: 79.3% open rate
Saturday at 11 am: 74.9% open rate

Product

Saturday at 10 am: 77.1% open rate
Saturday at 11 am: 72.5% open rate
Monday at 1 pm: 72.4% open rate

Recruiting/HR

Thursday at 12 am: 67.0% open rate
Wednesday at 6 am: 65.3% open rate
Monday at 8 pm: 65.3% open rate

Sales

Sunday at 5 pm: 67.8% open rate
Thursday at 6 pm: 64.3% open rate
Sunday at 2 pm: 63.2% open rate

Marketing

Sunday at 10 pm: 71.1% open rate
Sunday at 6 pm: 69.6% open rate
Thursday at 5 pm: 69.2% open rate

Data*

Sunday at 5 pm: 83.4% open rate
Monday at 6 am: 76.3% open rate
Sunday at 11 am: 75.4% open rate

Design

Saturday at 6 pm: 78.2% open rate
Thursday at 8 am: 74.9% open rate
Saturday at 11 am: 74.8% open rate

* Data on Data, Biz dev, and PMM roles was limited, so their numbers may not be as meaningful as those of the other roles listed. Still, these are good send times to start with when A/B testing your messaging.

Overall best send times by day of the week

- Monday sees the best overall open rates (61.6%), followed by Sunday (61.4%)
- Still, there's little variation in open rates from Sunday–Friday (61.2% – 61.6%)
- Saturday sees the *worst* overall open rates (58.3%)
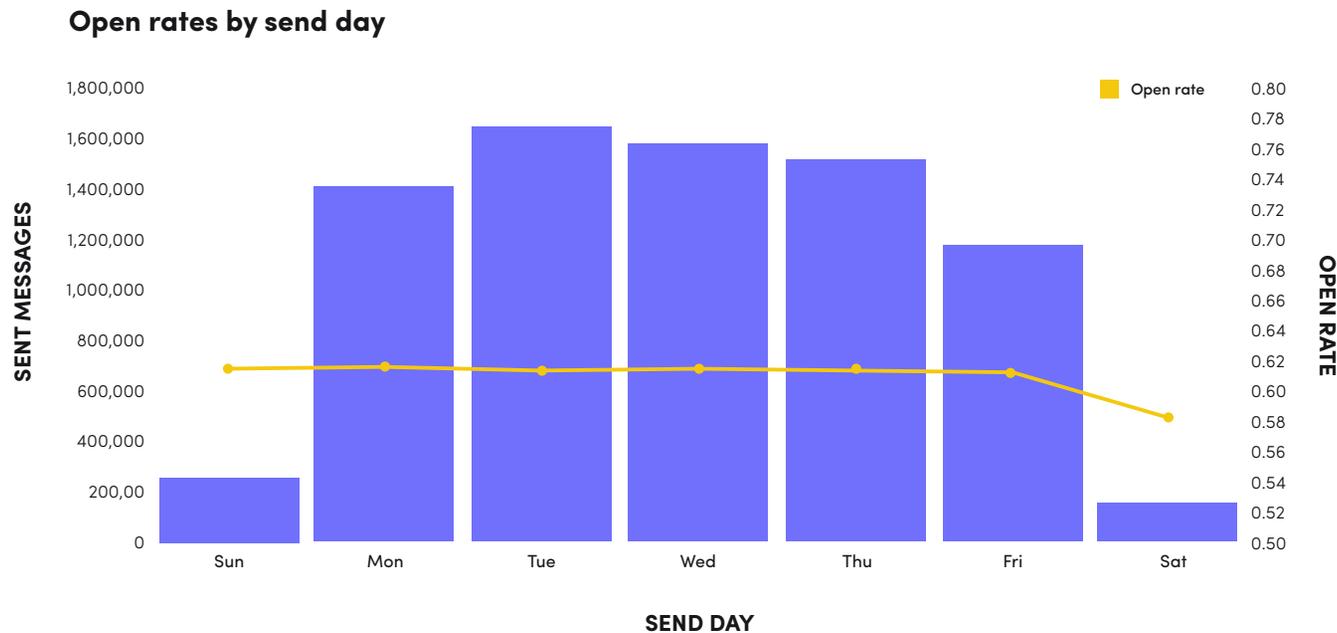
It's worth noting how few recruiters send outreach on Sundays, despite how well the data shows those messages perform. If you have the ability to set-and-forget outreach, we recommend experimenting with sending on Sundays. You'll either catch talent that afternoon/evening while they're preparing for the week ahead, or first thing Monday morning as they're cleaning out their inboxes in preparation for the days to come.

Open rates by send day

Overall best send times by hour

Throughout the work week, the best overall send times by hour are:
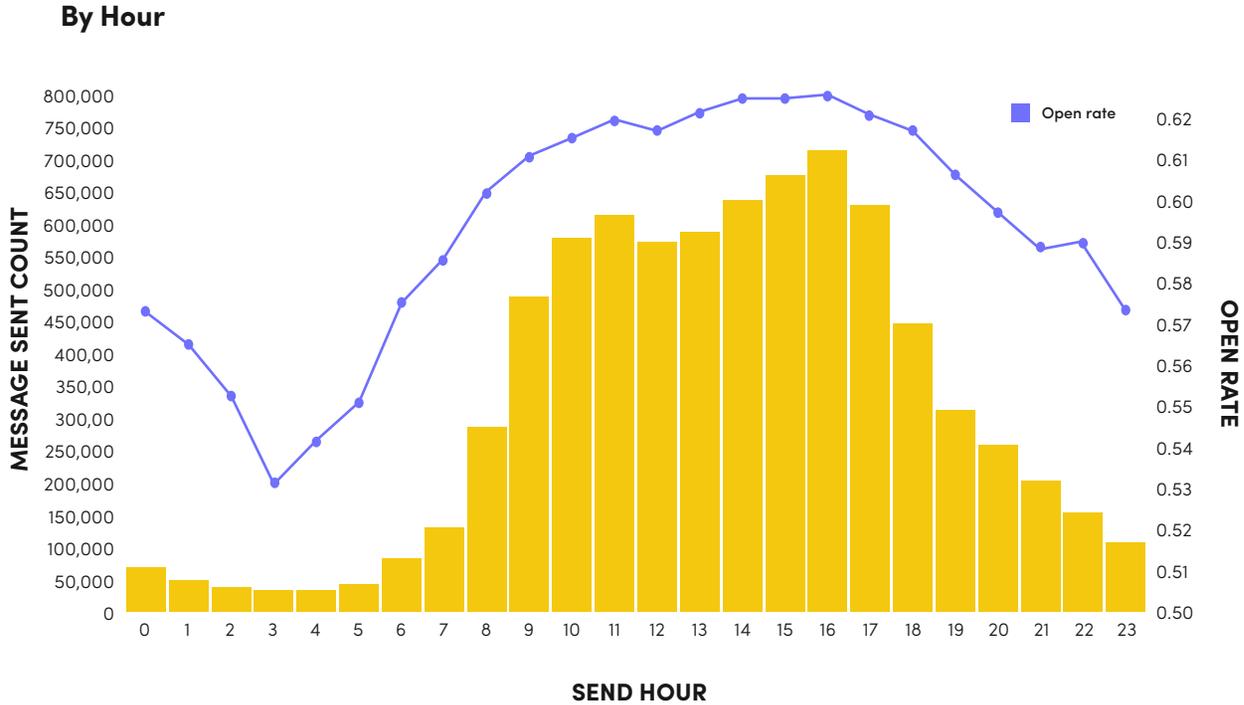
🕓 **4 pm**
62.6% open rate

🕒 **3 pm**
62.6% open rate

🕑 **2 pm**
62.5% open rate

🕐 **1 pm**
62.2% open rate

In other words, the closer to 5 pm, the better. 5 pm also sees strong open rates (62.1%), though you're a little more likely to have missed your window at that point. 11 am sees strong open rates as well (62.0%), likely because recruiters are catching prospects just before their lunch hour.
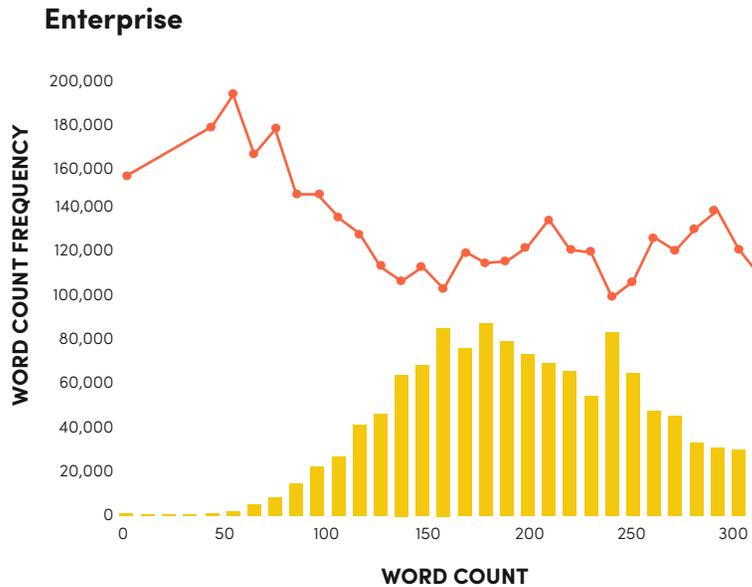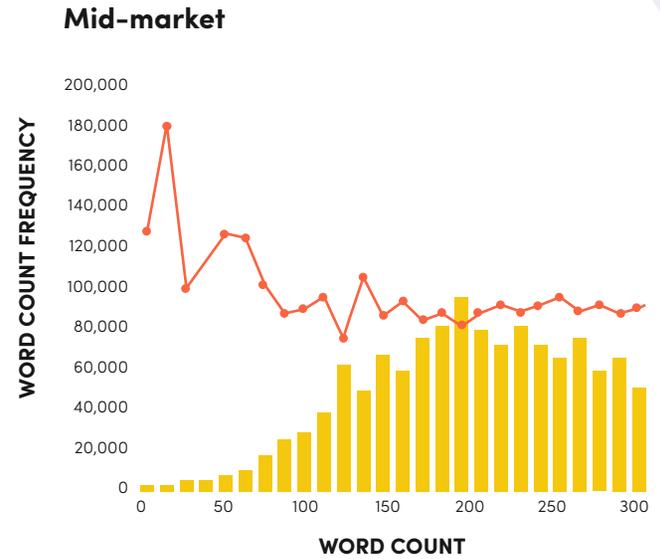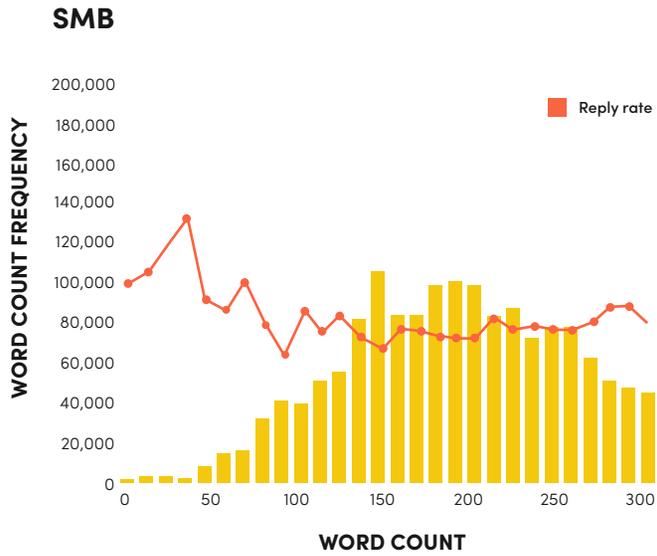
By Hour

Message length

In aggregate, the majority of our customers tend to stay in the 170-210 word count range for the initial message of their outreach sequence. (There are some variations here, of course. Outreach from SMBs and Mid-market organizations, for example, tends to be a bit longer—hovering closer to 210. This is likely because, in lieu of a strong talent brand, sourcers and recruiters take time to introduce the organizations they're writing from.) That said, we observed a pretty meaningful pattern in our data: regardless of company size, initial outreach with a word count of 51-60 sees the highest response rates across the board.*

Reply rates as a factor of word count (aggregate)
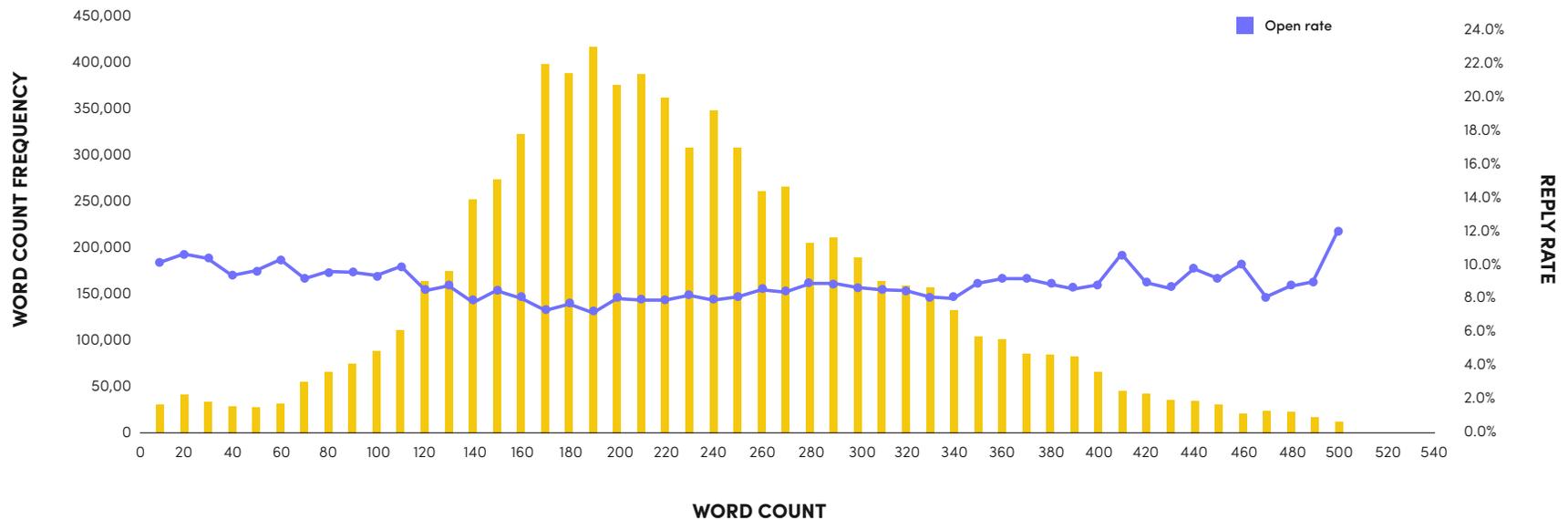
* Word count indicates the upper limit of the group. For example, "10" indicates 1-10 words. "50" indicates 41-50 words.

Here's how reply rates as a factor of word count break down by company size:

SMB

WORD COUNT FREQUENCY (y-axis)
WORD COUNT (x-axis)

Reply rate

Mid-market

WORD COUNT FREQUENCY (y-axis)
WORD COUNT (x-axis)

Enterprise

WORD COUNT FREQUENCY (y-axis)
WORD COUNT (x-axis)

Message length: Err on the shorter side

It's worth noting that, because sourcers and recruiters tend to write longer messages, our data set of 60-word outreach isn't that large (31,000+ messages) and so may be skewed. Yet there's also a pretty clear overall downward trend in each of the above charts. Given that, **we'd recommend initial messages in the 60-120 word count range** (though by all means, A/B test longer ones! We've seen long messages do well—both for ourselves at Gem, and for our customers!)

The "shorter is better" strategy echoes what LinkedIn studies have shown about best practices for InMail: "The response rate for the shortest InMails [400 *characters* or less] is 22% higher than the average response rate for all InMails."
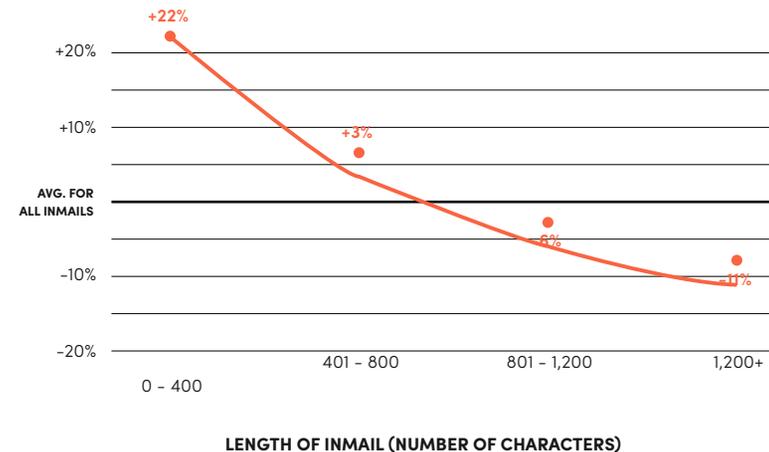
There's a commonsense element to the argument that short-and-to-the-point outreach (assuming it's also personalized and genuine) will outperform long emails. Remember, passive candidates aren't exactly swimming in free time. And you can deliver the essentials—a personalized mention, a compelling detail or two about the opportunity, a call to action—in fewer than 10 sentences.

Then there's mobile to consider: An iPhone will show about 120 words at a time. Don't make passive talent scroll for the good stuff.

Remember: you'll have three follow-up emails to offer more detail about company or team culture, workplace benefits, employee spotlights, and more. (You can also use hyperlinks directing prospects to web pages on careers, diversity, and culture when *they* want to offer more information. This keeps the messaging simultaneously rich and short.) So don't cram everything into your initial outreach. *You* know your persona and what's most compelling for them. Start with the things at the top of the list. Leave the rest for them to ask you about when you get them on the phone.

Shorter InMails get better response rates

RESPONSE RATES FOR DIFFERENT LENGTHS OF INMAILS COMPARED TO THE OVERALL AVERAGE RATE

+22%

+3%

-6%

-11%

+20%

+10%

AVG. FOR
ALL INMAILS

-10%

-20%

0 - 400   401 - 800   801 - 1,200   1,200+

LENGTH OF INMAIL (NUMBER OF CHARACTERS)

Insights from LinkedIn

Make the email easy to read

Take structure into account: a longer email is as good as the breathing space between sentences. Break your outreach up into shorter blocks of text so the message contains 3-4 paragraphs. Consider bullet points. From a UX perspective, this is easier on the eyes—and easier for the recipient to scan and digest than one big block of text would be.

"Everyone says: you've got to have a short message. And I was like, I've never done that, and I've always been successful. So I tested it. I created two sequences in Gem. One was super condensed: *I'm hiring for my team, help us make an impact*, short and sweet. The other was: *Let me tell you what we're doing on my team, some of the challenges we have, how you would make an impact.* I had fewer opens and replies on the long one, but more candidates replied with interest. So dive into your own metrics to figure out what works for *you.*"

Jaime Onofre
Recruiting Manager

_zapier

"I'm definitely in the shorter-is-better camp. Of course, the shorter the message, the more compelling its words need to be. The essential thing is to make sure you're always adding value for the candidate, whether it's in 20 words or 200 words."

Chinsin Sim
Senior Recruiter, Business Strategy & Operations

Robinhood

Message content

Here are the words most often used in outreach that elicits responses.* Use this as insight into what traditionally works—but also as an invitation to do something *different* than the messages your prospective candidates are seeing all the time.

For example, "building" is a popular verb to describe what a team is doing. What other compelling verbs can you use to describe a-day-in-the-life? What can you say *beyond* calling someone a "great fit," telling them you love their "profile" or their "background," asking if they want to "chat," and so on?

* "Company_name," "first_name," and "company" are Gem tokens that auto-populate with the prospect's name and organization when the message is sent.

Introducing the {{reason}} token

The {{reason}} token is a concept unique to Gem's platform that allows recruiters to personalize the motivation for reaching out to each prospect *while* on their LinkedIn, GitHub, SeekOut, etc. profiles (e.g. "I'm reaching out because you worked at [Company X] for four years, and it looks like you have rare industry expertise for an opportunity that just came up here"). This variable is then inserted into respective prospects' messages when sequences are sent in batch.

Message content

Get personal

Our data at Gem shows that highly personalized outreach delivers the best ROI. Stage 1 messages that use a {{reason}} token have an overall reply rate 23.7% greater than those *without* a {{reason}} token. The takeaway? Deep personalization—explaining to a candidate why you're reaching out to them specifically—will be well worth your time.

Experiment with personalization at scale with tokens

Because each prospect—or each prospect pool—will have their own "sweet spot," sourcers should experiment with and test tokens at scale. Some questions worth asking:

- Do {{company}} tokens or {{title}} tokens get better response rates?
- Is it better to mention prospects' *current* company or *your* company?
- How long after graduation does the {{school}} token continue to have value?
- Do more tokens = more responses? Or are there diminishing after returns after a certain point?
- What's the best possible use your team can make of {{reason}} tokens?

Stage 1 messages that use a {{reason}} token have an overall reply rate 23.7% greater than those *without* a {{reason}} token.

Give talent the details they want to hear

What talent values in work, and the factors they prioritize in their career decisions, has seen some transformation since 2020. Your employee value proposition (EVP), which your outreach points to, needs to evolve with talents' changing priorities. Of course, things like meaningful work, career development, engaged and supportive leadership, and competitive salary and benefits all remain table stakes. But here's what else talent cares about most right now, and what your message content should speak to:

Flexibility

The pandemic shattered long-standing assumptions about where (and when) work gets done, and flexibility is now the #1 priority for job candidates. 51% of candidates say they wouldn't apply to a job if remote/hybrid work wasn't an option, and 33% of candidates have turned down a job because it didn't offer flexible or remote work options. So if a flexible work schedule is part of your EVP, call it out loudly in your outreach.

Employee well-being

Flexibility certainty falls into this broader category. Employee well-being covers everything from mental health to work-life balance to stress management to non-traditional forms of wellness like mindfulness or financial wellbeing. Think teletherapy stipends. Think clear guidelines for your employees about when the workday ends. Think monthly "wellness days" that the entire team has off for self-care. If your company offers these things, let talent know as much.

Stability

This is a big one in 2022, in a post-pandemic world with a great deal of market uncertainty. Candidates are asking questions about stability they've never asked before: How likely is it that the role you've sourced them for would be impacted if the market continues to turn? Has your team had to rescind any offers? Has your organization had to lay off employees or pause hiring? If so, what roles and why? How have market conditions impacted your business' performance? If you can demonstrate company stability as part of your outreach— whether by revealing more about growth plans or company financials—do so.

83% of candidates consider an organization's diversity when deciding whether to accept a job

62% of candidates want to see salary front-and-center in a job description

56% of employees say the pandemic made them want to contribute more to society

Flexibility is the #1 priority for job candidates

Diversity and inclusion

83% of candidates say they consider an organization's diversity when deciding whether to accept a job; 63% say they turn to social media for employee sentiment about diversity; and 17% say they've abandoned a recruitment process in the past because of lack of diversity at the company. How diverse is your leadership team or board? Do you have employee resource groups (ERGs)? Are your benefits inclusive? Are underrepresented employees being promoted at the same rate as their majority peers? Are you using your platform to give voice to social justice issues? Whatever your company is sincerely up to, make those efforts visible in your outreach. (This may mean pointing to your careers page, where this content should live.)

Corporate social responsibility, mission, and values

As the boundary between our work lives and personal lives has shrunk, it's as important as ever for workers to feel aligned with the mission and purpose of the companies they work for—your (and their) "why." According to a Gartner survey from late last year, 65% of employees said the pandemic made them rethink the place work should have in their lives, while 56% said it made them want to contribute more to society. So if your company is doing what it can to reduce its carbon footprint, engage in volunteer efforts or charitable giving, make environmentally and socially conscious investments, or otherwise offer employees a sense of meaning and purpose, share that out.

Salary

Salary may not be the #1 deciding factor for candidates anymore; but it's a very hot topic these days, and it's certainly still a critical element of any career decision. Indeed, 54% of candidates have recently abandoned a recruitment process because the salary didn't meet expectations, and 62% say they want to see salary information front-and-center in a job description. Misalignment on salary expectations can be avoided by transparently presenting salary ranges up-front—perhaps even as soon as your initial outreach sequence.

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

According to one recent survey, **the most important things an organization can offer its employees in 2022 are:**

1. **Work-life balance**
2. **Career advancement opportunities**
3. **Compensation reflective of what they're worth**
4. **A great manager and/or team**
5. **A compelling work culture**
6. **A sense of purpose**
7. **A strong and thoughtful benefit package**

Of course, you won't be able to speak to all of these things at once. Choose one or two elements of your EVP for each stage of your outreach sequence. Talent will come to understand the bigger picture of your organization's offerings with each new email they open.

Gem

"We're not trying to sell anything in our outreach. It's not like,"Hey, here's a job." We're trying to start a genuine conversation. I want someone to respond to the dog photos I send with pictures of their *own* dog, and *that* leads to a conversation, which eventually brings us to a discussion about their career. An easy segue is, "What are your heartburns at your current company?" When we have the answer to *that* question, we know what value prop to use right off the bat. We're telling them how things work at Yext with their pain point in mind. And the best part—we haven't even *touched* on the opportunity yet."
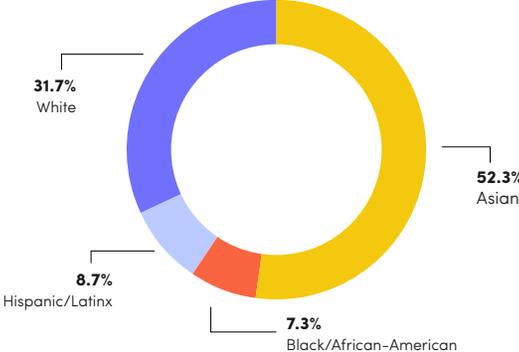
Michael Franco
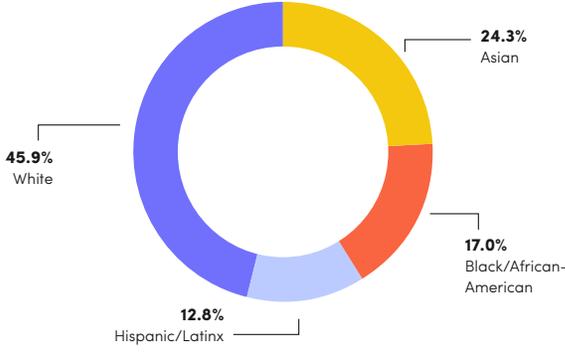Senior Directorr of Engineering
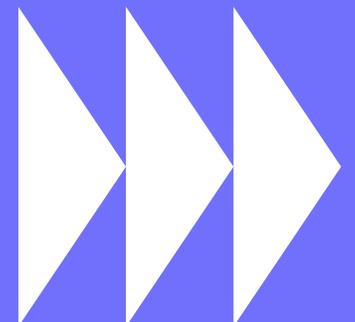
Diversity

We've included diversity data this year because it's as important to consider *whom* your outreach goes to as it is to consider *what* you're saying and *when* you're saying it. Many of Gem's customers have strong diversity initiatives in place, but diversity is a work in progress for everyone. We recommend you use this data to benchmark your outreach efforts against, and do what you can to surpass the percentages shown here for underrepresented groups.

- Asian talent sees the most outreach for technical roles; Black talent sees the least

- White talent sees the most outreach for non-technical roles; Hispanic/Latinx talent sees the least

- ¾ of outreach for technical roles is sent to men

- Outreach for non-technical roles sees slightly more gender parity—though men still receive about 10% more outreach than women do for these roles
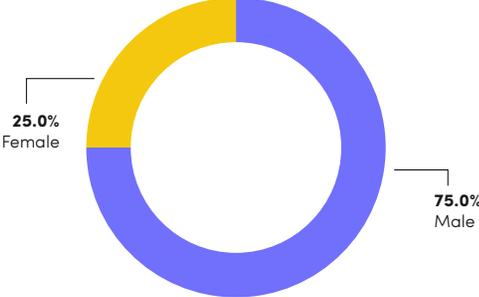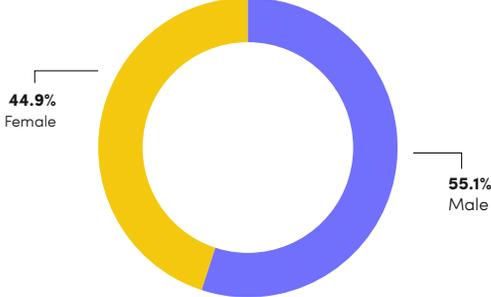
Outreach by race/ethnicity (tech)

- 52.3% Asian
- 7.3% Black/African-American
- 8.7% Hispanic/Latinx
- 31.7% White

Outreach by race/ethnicity (non-tech)

- 24.3% Asian
- 17.0% Black/African-American
- 12.8% Hispanic/Latinx
- 45.9% White

Outreach by gender (tech)

- 75.0% Male
- 25.0% Female

Outreach by gender (non-tech)

- 55.1% Male
- 44.9% Female

* The above data is limited to stage 1 messages.

Examples of great recruiting email outreach

Explain why you're reaching out to them

This is another way of reiterating: *personalize*. And we don't just mean mentioning mutual interests here, though that's been shown to work in subject lines. You've done your research. You know what projects and initiatives your prospect has been undertaking at their current company in recent years. You know their interests and skill sets, and have a strong sense of what they could bring to the position (or to a specific current project) and offer your company. Tell them as much. It'll flatter them, yes. It'll also make you look instantly trustworthy.

Hey {{first_name}},

{{reason}}.

[company name] is an account aggregation technology looking to make big waves in fintech. Last year we raised $147M in funding... and now we're ready to scale!

We'll need to grow by about 70 engineers (we're currently at 15) over the next two years, so we're looking for the right people to have a hand in shaping our engineering culture as we grow. {{extra1}} tells me you might enjoy, and add a lot of value, to our building process.

When do you have some time to jump on the phone this week? I'm flexible a
your background, interests, and of course, share more about [company nam

Hey {{first_name}}, I hope your {{day_of_week}} is going well.

I partner with our Success Engineering Managers at [company name] to identify new technology-focused, customer-centric individuals for our team. Your experience {{extra1}} caught my eye and I thought I'd reach out to tell you more about our team. This is a truly ideal time to join -- it's still early enough to have a huge impact and to create an amazing home in the greater Denver tech-community. We're outgrowing the startup phase and running to power the entire customer data ecosystem, and we need the best people to take the market.

I realize that you might be happy at {{company}} and not actively planning a move right now, yet my hunch is that this would be a great conversation at least. I'm adding a few links below in case you want to dig in more.

Let me know if you're interested. The next step would be to have an intro call with me to help familiarize you more with the customer-facing Success Engineer opportunity. Open to learning more?

Talk about "opportunities," not "roles" or "positions"

"Positions" are static; "opportunities" are dynamic. 87% of millennials say professional development or opportunities for career growth are very important to them in a job. Think of this as the value proposition for your prospect. (Your mantra should be: "Upward trajectories, not lateral transfers.") Why would top talent who isn't even *looking* for work consider your open position a better opportunity than what they've got now? The ability to build a team from scratch? Increased organizational impact? The opportunity to learn a new skill set (and ultimately to be more attractive in the market)? Whatever it is, speak to that.

Hey {{first_name}},

Pleasure to meet you. My name is [name] and I work for [company name], a Series B, NEA-backed data analytics company that is starting to explode with growth.

Straight to the point: We are about to double in size and we're looking to hire a Solutions Architect (Professional Services/Consultant). This role will work on implementation / analytics consulting for our top clients and simultaneously create scalable processes for a new org as we take on more customers next year.

Why you: Your experience at {{company}} is exactly what we are looking for in our first SA team! We need someone who has both customer-facing experience and the right set of technical expertise. {{reason}}

Why [company name]?

• Backed by NEA and Menlo
• Crushing our sales goals quarter after quarter
• Going through huge growth (35 --> 85 in headcount 2020, doubling again in 2021)
• Our product is vertical and dept agnostic
• Extremely competitive pay

I hope to hea

Hey {{first_name}},

My name is [name] and I head up Sales Recruiting at [company name]. We are looking for a Sales Operations Manager to drive operations for our fast-growing sales team. As the first Sales Operations Manager, you'll be instrumental in solving critical business problems and building the blueprint to help our organization scale. Our Director of Sales Operations was impressed with your experience at {{company}} and thought it would be a great fit for what we're looking for. Do you have 15-20 minutes for an exploratory conversation in the next week?

More about the opportunity:

• Amazing culture

• $88M in funding from investors including Union Square Ventures, First Round Capital and Sequoia

• Opportunity to work closely with Sales Leadership team coming from Atlassian, Twilio, Optimizely and Google

• Ability to build the blueprint and operationalize the infrastructure to help a young sales team scale 4x from today

• Strong revenue growth (100% YOY growth) and impressive portfolio of customers: Twilio, Airbnb, Jet, Zillow

Give them what they're not getting now

This best practice is an extension of the last: It's one thing to speak to opportunities; it's another to speak to the opportunities prospects *aren't* experiencing in their *current* role. Where does their current company fall short—in terms of growth opportunities, benefits, company culture, work environment? If your company offers something more energetic, substantial, or successful, emphasize those elements—*without*, of course, mentioning their company's weakness. (Your prospect will figure that out for themselves.)

Hi {{first_name}},

My name is [name] and I'm working alongside our CTO at [company name] to find product-focused Mid to Senior Web Engineers to join us... from anywhere right now, though our HQ is in Austin. Based on your experience with {{reason}}, I feel you would be a great fit.

In the past two years, we've raised $35M in funding, opened in 4 cities, and are on track to double in size by next year. We've proven our business model, are generating revenue each quarter, and now need your expertise to scale, optimize, and automate our operations.

What it's like to work here:

• No product managers. You own and drive the product from start to finish.

• Lots of growth opportunity as we grow from a small team of 6 engineers to 20+ by the end of the year.

• Tackling technical challenges across internal tooling, guest experience, finance, and data.

• Work on a very collaborative team of forward-thinking, creative, and product-focused people.

{{first_name}},

I'm checking in one last time, hoping to chat with you about the Head of Information Security role at [company name].

Here are 5 reasons why you should work for [company name]:

1. Hot, early-stage start-up with big-name backers – Founders Fund, SV Angel, and Sequoia Capital
2. We are solving a real-world problem in a $1.75T industry ready for disruption
3. [company name] is positioned to win in an unsaturated market – already captured 5% of US market
4. Build your dream team and have a massive impact
5. Work among wonderful people and peers as we build this business – 5 stars on Glassdoor

Mention company mission and culture

You're not just selling an opportunity; you're selling a daily experience. It's worth noting that one of the biggest roadblocks candidates face when changing jobs is "not knowing what it's really like to work at the company." So describe it for them.

Consider work-life balance, collaborative environments, paid time off, continuing education, and more. Consider what you know about the prospect's interests and how they'd fit in with your current team. Granted, you won't have time to expound. Make a brief mention about culture or values, and link to a page on your website dedicated to company mission or culture.

Hi {{first_name}},

I noticed you have a great Infra-Eng Leadership background with {{company}} in a {{title}} capacity. [company name] is hiring for a Platform Manager who will take over a high-performing SRE/SETI style team due to growth in the organization. I'm curious if you might be open to considering a career opportunity if the company/team/tech are right?

[company name] has an incredible origin story which has led us to now serving 1.4M registered developers who build with [company name]. Outside of our incredible open-source culture, one of the aspects which I'm particularly excited about is our focus on user privacy & community impact. We are also big proponents of creating a diverse culture and building a company based on values and a moral compass.

The Platform Team practices the playbook outlined by the Google SRE visionaries. We believe in empowering & growing teams to reach their full potential which is demonstrated by our CTO's Story and Philosophy. A quick note is that we live in containerized SPOT instances on AWS which allows us to pay 10-20% of list price for our service needs as we scale. There's a lot of great work in place already but so much left to do.

Would you be open to learning more about what we could offer you in a career opportunity?

Hey {{first_name}},

Happy {{day_of_week}}! I wanted to see if you had any questions from my last message.

Right now, [company name] has over 60k+ customers which is just 1% of the small business market in the US. For the next few years, our business strategy is centered around growing our customer base. There's a ton of opportunity for the Growth team to be at the core of how we think about scaling our business. We've got some really ambitious goals for what we want to achieve, and we've got a fantastically supportive team to go chase them.

Any interest in a quick chat? I'd love to tell you more about what we are working on!

Here are a few more links about our engineering culture and what we are up to:

- A day in the life of an engineer (how we work day-to-day!)
- Engineering values and principles (what we stand for – we're working on making these values & principles crisper, so feel free to ask if you have any questions. One of my favorites is the 'humility' value)
- [product name] (our hot new product! But also a very crucial way to financially empower the thousands of people we pay who might need a more flexible approach than the typical two paychecks a month. Solving this problem is particularly near & dear to my heart, and I'm so happy we're exploring this space)

Offer social proof

"Social proof" is the psychological phenomenon in which people look to others to determine "right action" in a given situation. While it's originally a marketing term, the concept is just as relevant to talent outreach. Typically, social proof in sourcing comes in the form of employee confirmation that the company culture is as dynamic and supportive as the recruiter says it is. If you're sourcing diversity prospects, maybe you link to a blog post written by your female head engineer, for example. If you don't yet have that first-degree connection, other strategies include media mentions and acknowledgments that others have taken a particular action with you ("Candidates whom we've recently interviewed have said [X]"). The point is to give voice to those people top talent most want to hear from.

Indeed, in a recent study from LinkedIn, candidates said they wanted to hear employee views. So link to your careers page, your about page, or a page on company culture where employee quotes are featured—or forefront employee sentiment in the email itself.

Hi {{first_name}},

Sharing with you a blog post one of our top reps wrote detailing the unusual DNA of [company name]'s sales org. If you feel you have DNA superseding the "traditional salespeople" you work with or popularized in Wolf of Wall Street, give this piece a read.

A key quote:

"The Account Development team includes an Olympic hopeful in Atlanta, a former professional rugby player in San Francisco, and a ballet-dancing, chess-playing, part-time DJ in London. In fact, the team is led globally by a former biomedical engineer and a special operations veteran – it's not your traditional group of deal-closers. But it is a group of multi-talented individuals who draw upon a diverse range of backgrounds to challenge their prospects to think differently."

[name] joined in [date] and a few months later was promoted from our team to a field Account Executive role.

Hi {{first_name}},

My name is [name] and I lead the Enterprise Outbound team here at [company name]. I came across your profile and felt compelled to reach out. Your experience at {{company}} is ideal for what I'm looking for as I build my team of Enterprise reps.

With our strong product-market fit, opportunity in the enterprise, and talented leadership, [company name] is a place where you can have a tangible impact and continue to accelerate your already-impressive career.

I joined [company name] just under 6 months ago to work with incredibly bright people on a uniquely-positioned product that solves real problems for engineers and marketers. [company name] has an insane growth trajectory and we're looking for top-tier talent to assist with that growth. I've led high-growth teams a few times in my career, but have never been part of an organization that values the SDR team as much as I've seen here. We just had two promotions from the SDR team—one into the SMB AE org and one into the customer success org—and I'm eager to share my experience with you.

I realize you've been a {{role}} for {{duration}} now and probably on track for your next role, but I would welcome the chance to share why this would be an amazing opportunity for you and answer any questions you might have about the team. At the very least, it would be great to have another connection in the space.

Consider conversational cadence

Conversational cadence is exactly what it sounds like: the speed at which you move the conversation forward (even if that "conversation" looks more like a monologue). Remember, you have four emails in which to motivate engagement and elicit a response... and you have plenty of information about your company to offer. So introduce it in small doses. If your initial outreach about how the opportunity could advance your prospect's career doesn't elicit engagement, perhaps your first follow-up describes company culture, and your second shouts out the Series C funding you just received.

Every prospect will have their own "sweet spot"—that nugget of information that finally animates them into action.

Hey {{first_name}},

Are you starting to think about a new jumping off point for your career? [company name] just got named on the 2022 Career-Launching List and I'd love to chat with you about growth and learning opportunities here.

Thanks!

Hi {{first_name}},

I wanted to follow up on my previous message. You've got a unique background that is exactly what we need to strategically lead the design of [companys name]'s products. Since we are a small team, there's a huge opportunity to influence our organization and the direction of growth. Check out why [name and title of colleague] joined [company], and learn why you should too.

I'm stoked to tell you more about what we are working on at [company name]! I've included more information on the team and the role here for you to look over.

Thanks!

Hey {{first_name}},

I wanted to share the latest news with you that [company name] has been awarded one of the Best Workplaces in Technology by Great Places to Work and Fortune Magazine! This means a lot to us as we continue to try to push the boundaries of technology and workplace culture.

If you're open to discussing opportunities here at [company name] or learning more, what's your availability for a 15-20 minute chat?

Thanks!

Make your breakup email unforgettable

Done well, the breakup (aka "Hail Mary") email may very well be the hook that finally gets prospects' attentions. After all, loss aversion—the notion that the fear of loss is more powerful than the pleasure of gains—is real. It can be difficult for prospects to hear you confirm for them that they're not moving forward in the process—so try it, and see if that's what gets a bite.

Some of the best breakup emails we've seen propose that the sourcer/prospect relationship take a new form—whether through blog subscriptions, company events, or referral programs ("I have a philosophy that good people know good people!"). Parting gifts are memorable. Humor is memorable. And poems will likely leave their mark for a long time.

Hi {{first_name}},

The bad news is I haven't heard back from you. The good news is that you are probably loving your current role.

Since this will be my last email, I wanted to sign-off with a gift as a thank you for reading.

It's one of my favorite tools from Sourcing Master Glen Cathey – a handy Candidate Sourcing Funnel Calculator to help you estimate how many people you need to identify to find your purple squirrel.

Hopefully you will find it useful.

Hey {{first_name}},

I've reached out a few times because I really wanted to share [company name] and the role I thought you'd be a great fit for. Since I haven't heard back, I'll assume the timing isn't right and I won't continue to pester with emails.

If anything changes for you in the future or even if you are just curious about what we are building, please don't hesitate to reach out. Consider me your [company name] resource! Check our blog to keep up with growth and to get free industry tips!

Hey {{first_name}},

I figured I would try bugging you one more time. Totally understand if you're not ready to make a move right now; I know this year has thrown a wrench into a lot of things.

Maybe we can interest you in attending one of our virtual events? We've got one coming up in which we'll talk about infrastructure disasters (and learnings!). It would be great to "see" you there.

Hey {{first_name}},

I'm not going to lie, I'm a little sad we didn't get to connect but I wanted to leave you with a poem.

Roses are red
Violets are clear
I wish you the best
In growing your career

Body copy "dont's"

Don't paste a full job description in the email. Remember: the end goal may be getting candidates in the door for an interview; but the goal of initial communication is an interested response from prospects.

Don't drone on. Remember our best practice on message length: You're aiming for short and curiosity-piquing. A lot can get lost in a lengthy message. You'll get to the juicy details once you've got them on the phone or in your office.

Don't offer a laundry list of required skills. The professionals you're reaching out to already know what's required to do the work. Focus on opportunity instead.
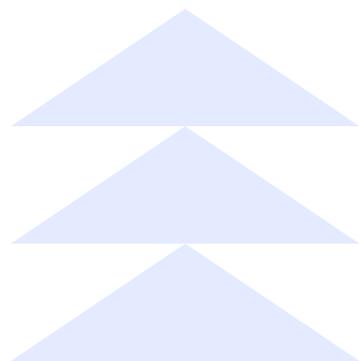
> "When I'm recruiting for a position, I often spend time with engineers on the teams I support to ask them questions that help me understand the in's and out's of their role: What makes this team attractive to join, what the day-to-day work is like, and what they'd say to a candidate considering a role like theirs. Their responses often go right into the body of my sequence emails. In that sense, the outreach is a joint effort across team members."

Olivia Duran
Manager of Technical Sourcing

ROBLOX

The *best* best practice: always be testing

It's worth stressing that the *real* "best practices" will be the things that get your team the most engaged responses and move the most qualified prospective candidates through your hiring funnel. What we've given you in this guide are starting points only. If you're using Gem for your sourcing activities, you have access to analytics such as open rates, reply rates, interested rates, click-through rates, number of follow-ups sent, who entered process, how far into the recruiting funnel they got, and more.

Elements of your email outreach worth testing

While it's easy to fixate on reply rates as the metric of your most successful outreach strategies, remember that open rates and click-through rates offer no less actionable insight. (Exceptional open rates mean you've hit upon compelling subject lines; great click-through rates mean you're linking to interesting content.) In other words, you'll know which prospects have "conveyed" interest even if they haven't directly expressed it.

These metrics should inform your judgement about which prospects to follow up with and how quickly, as well as what additional information to send them. (Did they click through to your careers page, or into that blog post by your head engineer that you linked to? Which of the LinkedIn profiles you provided saw the most views? Gem's analytics will offer insights into click-throughs. Use that intelligence to strategize your next step.)

Hands down, data will be your most priceless asset; and we recommend testing for the following metrics. Note that this list isn't inclusive, and that you won't be able to discover the answers to all of these questions through analytics. Some elements, like tone, there are no metrics for—but the questions are still worth asking:

After **how many follow-ups** does your team start seeing **diminishing returns**?

What's the **most effective wait time** between initial outreach and **each of your follow-ups**?

In subject lines, **which tokens** statistically attract the **most opens**?

Do **more tokens** in the message copy earn **more responses**? Or are there eventually **diminishing returns**?

Do you get **more opens** by appealing to **values or opportunities i**n your subject lines?

What **subject line "power verbs"** get you the most clicks?

What's the **average length** of your best-performing **subject lines**?

What's the **average length** of your best-performing **body copy**?

What is the **average length** of your best-performing **{{reason}} tokens**?

What **send times** are statistically **most effective** for which roles?

Do you see statistically **better response** rates when you send from a **recruiter or from someone in a leadership role**?

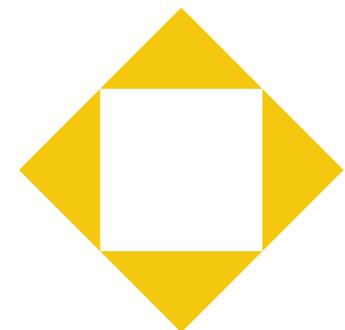At **what stage** in the sequence is it best for a recruiter to **switch to SOBO**?

For which roles is **SOBO best**?

Is there a **tone** in your email copy that seems to motivate the **highest levels of engagement**?

Which **links** get the **most clicks**?

What forms of **social proof** are most **compelling to your prospects**?

Which **break-up strategies** get the **most responses**?

"One critical practice is asking about our messaging after hiring someone. We're asking, "Hey, what attracted you? Why did you respond to this outreach?" I'll even ask, "Why did you click on this link but didn't open the second email?" The answers to those questions help us create future iterations of our outreach."

Michael Franco
Senior Director of Recruiting
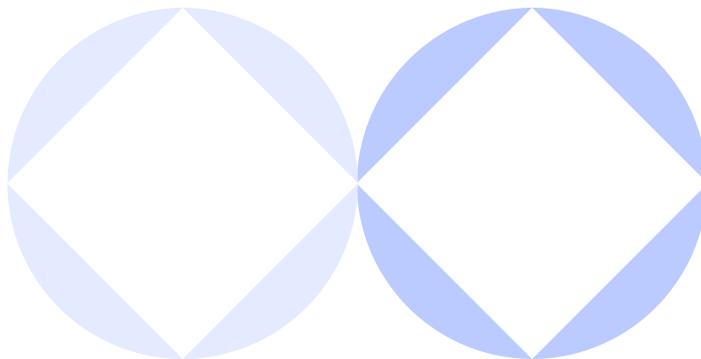
"Our CTO recently did a podcast about tech at Wheel; we put that in our outreach and Gem tracked clickthrough rates. That behavioral data showed passive talent was more interested in that podcast than a lot of other things we've linked to in the past. I took that data to Chris and said, now we know you need to do more podcasts. Clearly this is a powerful talent attraction strategy for us. You see tangible results in Gem that literally inform your employer branding strategy. It's not like, well, my instinct says this is working, but I have nothing to show for it."

Greg Troxell
Recruiting Manager

wheel
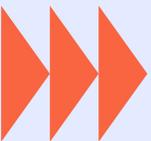
How Gem can help

Gem's Talent Engagement Platform is enabling over 1,200 talent teams to deliver a modern source of truth for all talent relationships. Customers love us for our usability, the depth of our analytics, and the ROI they see with us. Our customers see 2x response rates, 5x faster sourcing, and 10-day drops in time-to-hire.

Gem

Talent sourcing with Gem

Sourcing passive talent not only leads to a healthy pipeline, it also reduces time-to-hire. Sourced candidates are 4–5x more likely to be hired than inbound candidates are. Yet recruiters often struggle to surface this talent and engage with them. Gem ties all your critical tools together—your ATS, your email, the places you seek out candidates—and automates your workflows, from 1-click upload to follow-ups.

## Fill your pipeline with quality candidates from any database—*fast*

Whether you're sourcing for corporate or non-corporate reqs, salaried or hourly ones, tech or non-tech, Gem lets you source for any role from any site: LinkedIn, Github, SeekOut, Facebook, Twitter, Indeed... wherever you're looking for talent.

Gem's Chrome extension auto-captures prospective candidates' information directly—first and last name, title, work history, and more—saving sourcers and recruiters hours of manual labor. Now it's easier than ever to build pipelines of candidates.

Sequences & templates: Dynamic email templates use tokens automatically pulled from prospects' profiles for personalization at scale.

Automated follow-ups: Say goodbye to time-intensive manual follow-ups and spend more time building candidate relationships.

Email addresses and phone numbers: Gem serves up contact information you can trust.
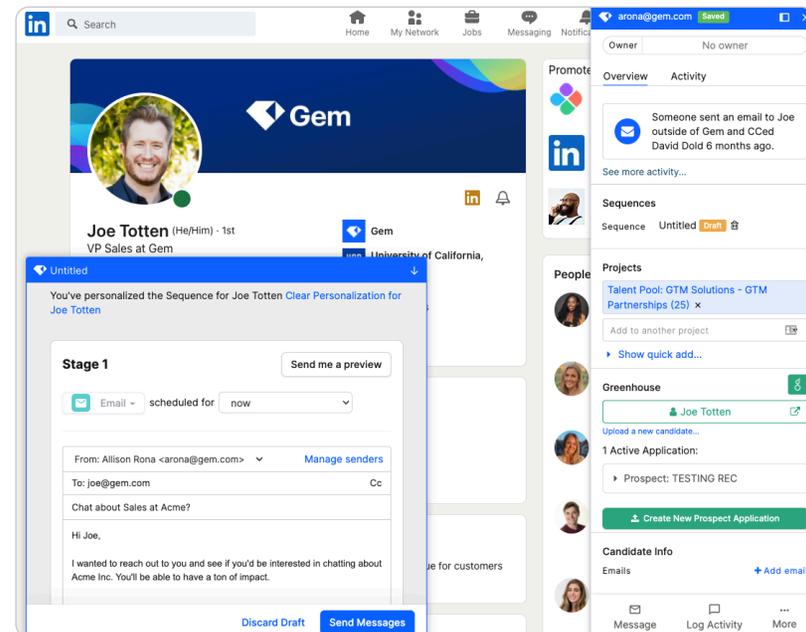
Talent pools: Build lists of candidates to reach out to for open and future roles, set-and-forget follow-ups and long-term nurture campaigns.

Rules of engagement: Improve candidate experience and prevent duplicate outreach with access to ownership for every prospect profile—along with an entire history of who on your team has engaged with that prospect in some way.

Send-on-behalf-of: exponentially increase response rates by sending outreach "from" hiring managers or executives with email aliases.

**Events:** Send invites, track attendance, follow up, and measure who converts into process.

Source from warm leads

The recruiters across your organization have interviewed a host of candidates over the years, and not everyone has been offered a role. Your team has an entire pool of "silver medalists" it's cultivated relationships with—talent who knows your organization, has bought into your product and culture, and who may be interested in a new role. So say goodbye to sourcing from scratch, and cut your time-to-hire by sourcing those warm candidates from your ATS and CRM.

Gem's Candidate Rediscovery surfaces talent profiles from within your silver medalist pool. Filter by criteria such as stage reached, rejection reason, source, DEI attributes, or interview feedback; easily add prospects to a re-engagement sequence; or share candidates between teams.

"When I came to Pure Storage and was shown Gem, I immediately thought, Oh, this is a godsend. I no longer had to send follow-ups manually or keep track of whom to follow up with on my own trackers."

Brian Wilhelm
Senior Technical Sourcer

PURESTORAGE®
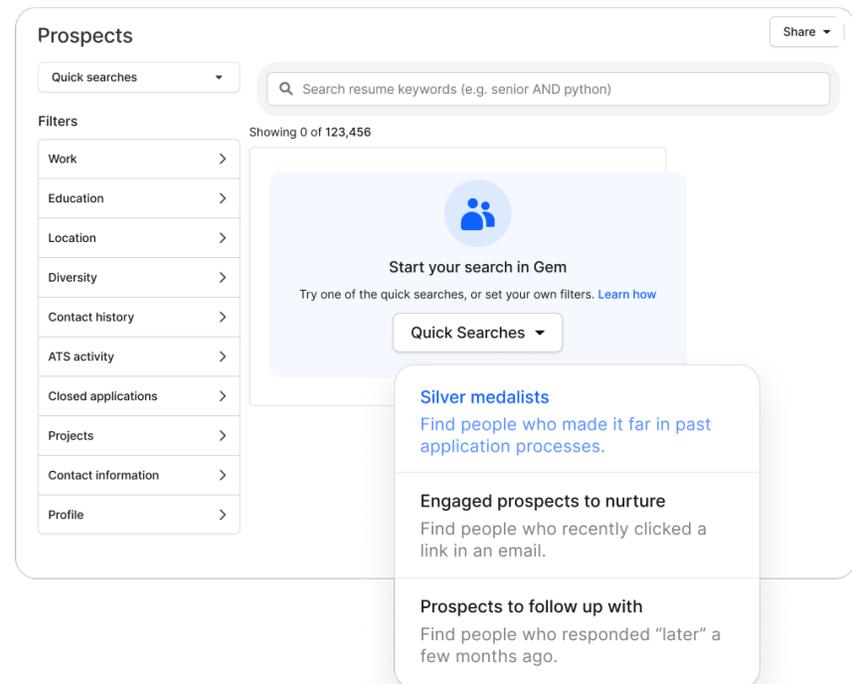
[Sr UX] Wandi SOBO Tanner ✏

Add Recipients | Edit | Share ⌄ | More options ⌄

All recipients ⌄   All stages ⌄   26 messages sent
excluding bounces

Recipients	Bounced (1)	Opened (10)	Clicked (8)	Replied (4)	Interested (1)	Converted (0)	
11	9%	91%	73%	36%	9%	0%	View link stats

Track what matters

You can't improve upon what you don't measure. Gem's Outreach and Content Stats automatically track the success of all outreach, and let sourcers and recruiters A/B test elements of their messaging such as subject lines. Which content sees the highest interested rates, and ultimately converts the most candidates into process?

Open, click, & reply tracking: Know who opened your email, and when. Track click activity, link engagement, and all responses in one place across your team. Sourcers and recruiters can discover best practices and optimize their outreach with this data.

Visibility into recruiter activity: Analyze activity by team member and track KPIs: numbers of LinkedIn views, prospects added to Gem, first messages and follow-ups sent, replies received, and candidates converted to process.

Track diversity automatically: Diversity efforts must begin at the very top of the funnel. Dig into the demographics of the recipients of your outreach, filtering by gender and race/ethnicity. Are your team's reachouts equitable? Are there elements of your messaging that are inadvertently alienating certain groups?

"I easily saved over $125,000 in my first year on agency fees for the roles I filled with Gem sequences. Gem has paid for itself well over 9x—a more-than 1000% ROI, just in the roles that I recruit for as a working manager."

Blake Thiess
Director of Talent Acquisition

Prestige Care, Inc.
Prestige Senior Living, L.L.C.

"Gem seems to have been built intentionally for sourcers and recruiters to not only become more efficient and optimize their top-of-funnel workflow, but also to leverage data and make smarter decisions."

Joe Gillespie
Head of Technical Recruitment

Robinhood

Keep track of all candidate conversations in one place

Whether you're sending InMails, messages on Indeed, or text messages, Gem serves as the central hub for *all* prospect and candidate communications. When you message and add candidates to Gem from wherever you source, all interactions sync back into the candidate's activity feed. *Every* member of your recruiting team has visibility into that feed. Say goodbye to siloed conversations, and hello to visibility and collaboration.

"We've tried everything and Gem is the first product to delight our hiring managers. Now, everyone's involved in the hiring process—our entire company is an extension of the recruiting team!"

Thomas Carriero
SVP, Twilio Engage GM

≈ Segment

Gem's end-to-end modern recruiting solution empowers talent acquisition teams to engage their entire talent network, optimize sourcing efforts, and uncover actionable insights that guide smarter, forward-looking decisions. Gem works alongside LinkedIn and other places that you source, while integrating with Gmail, Outlook, and your ATS. Find the talent you need to meet hiring targets and scale your teams with Gem.

To learn more and see a demo, visit **gem.com**

Lauren Shufran, Author

Lauren is a content strategist with a penchant for 16th-century literature. When they're not trying to tap into talent teams' pain points, they're on their yoga mat or hiking the hills of Marin County. Come at them with your favorite Shakespeare quote.

Jaeman Kim, Contributor

Jaeman has an accomplished career in analytics and strategic planning across a variety of industries and high growth start-ups. When not diving into data, Jaeman enjoys exploring new places, both local and abroad, and catching the UCLA game. Go Bruins!

Methodology

Over the last five years, Gem has worked with 1,200+ customers across a wide range of industries, including tech, finance, healthcare, and professional services. In that time, we've analyzed well nearly ten million outreach sequences, sent from thousands of sourcers and recruiters. The data in this report was drawn from both those analyses and our own research in the industry. Big gratitude to our very own Jaeman Kim for pulling all our user data.

Gem