

Fall 2024 Edition

Recruiting email outreach benchmarks and best practices





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Introduction

Over 1,000 talent teams trust Gem to manage their end-to-end recruiting process. And every year, we help them send over 4 million emails.

That's why we've refreshed "Gem's Guide to Email Outreach & Benchmarks" for 2024. These insights and best practices are drawn from over 4 million email sequences sent between March 1, 2023 and February 29, 2024.



If you've ever struggled with email outreach, you're not alone. There are so many factors involved—the time and day, subject line, sender, and of course, the content of the email itself!

The truth is that there's both an art and a science involved in this process.

We've combed through the data and pulled best practices from some of the most successful TA teams including Robinhood, Yext, Anthropic, Zapier, and Roblox. You'll find their suggestions sprinkled throughout this guide. Consider it your cheat sheet to more effective talent sourcing and outreach.

And, of course, if you're ever curious to learn more about how Gem can support you with sourcing and outreach, [we're more than happy to speak with you!](#)

Let's dive in!



Executive summary

1 Passive talent is more receptive to outreach.

Compared to 2022, 2024 shows that open rates are a touch lower, but reply and interest rates are noticeably higher! Make sure your email has the right hook to open the front door.

4 Personalize subjects line with tokens.

Using tokens like first name or company can increase open rates by up to 5% in absolute terms. Personalization is key to standing out from the crowd!

2 Sequence length: 5 is the magic number.

Just like in sales, follow-ups are the key to success in recruiting. Engagement starts to flatten after the 5th email so don't give up after the first one, but also avoid being too persistent!

5 Send outreach on behalf of hiring managers.

Only 22% of recruiters are using this tactic, yet data shows that sending-on-behalf-of the hiring manager or senior leaders can improve replies by 50+%!

3 Weekends are the hidden "Gem" for sends.

Few recruiters send outreach on weekends, but these messages perform well (>=66% open rates). If you can schedule emails, we recommend experimenting with sending on weekends.

6 Keep your emails short & sweet.

Most outreach is 170–210 words, but 50–100 words achieve higher response rates. Remember, the outreach is meant to drive interest, not sharing everything!

Remember

Always be testing!
It's worth stressing that the real "best practices" will be the strategies that work uniquely for you. Review metrics and A/B test to determine what works. Data is your best friend!

Part 1

How many emails to send and when to send them

The data in this section shares key metrics on email outreach benchmarks, like open rates, reply rates, and interested rates. We also present how these metrics vary based on different tactics and strategies like send times, message composition, and more.

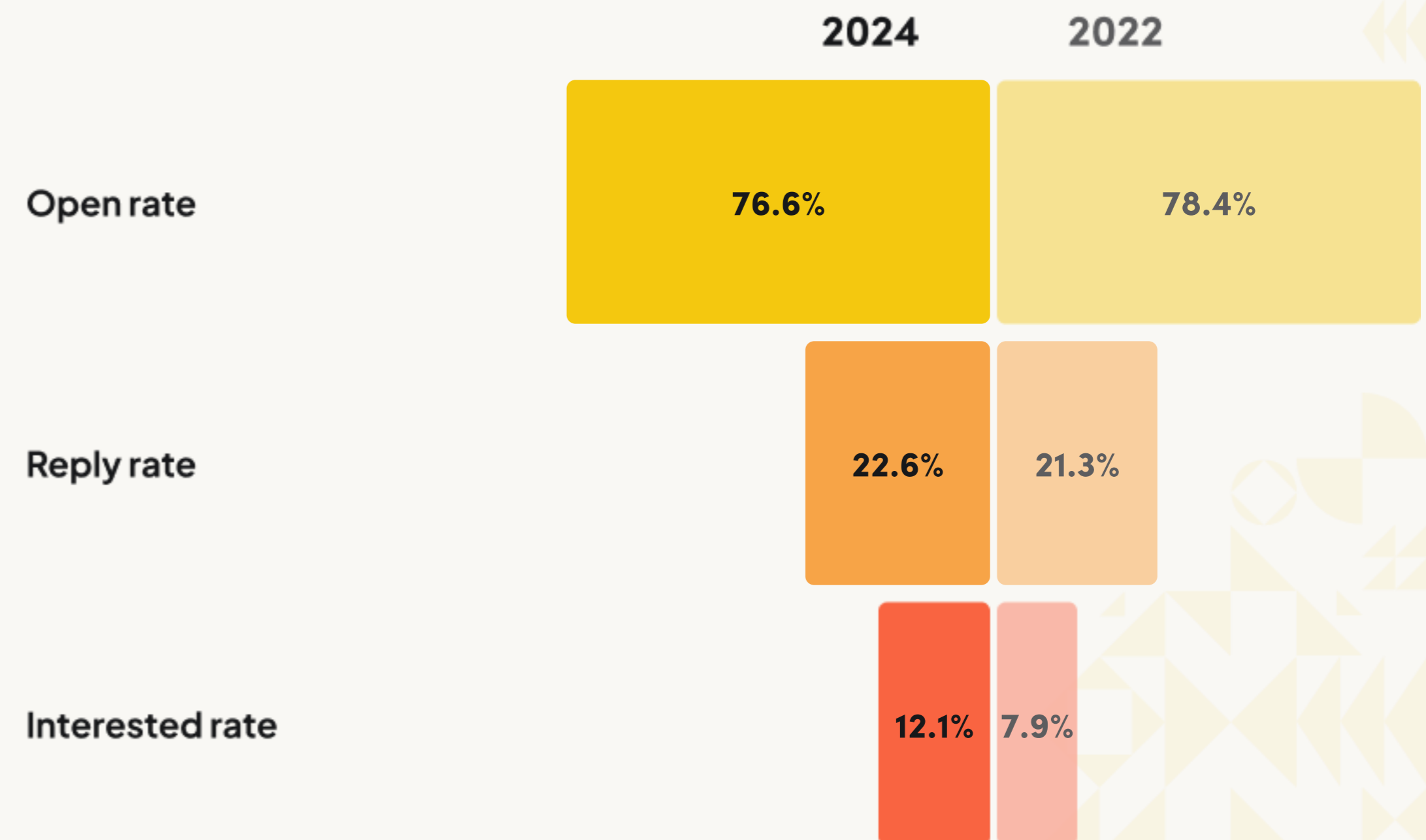


Overall benchmarks

On this page, we're sharing a bird's-eye view of overall open rates, reply rates, and interested rates from email outreach to passive talent. Compared to 2022, this year's open rates have come down a bit, but reply and interested rates metrics have noticeably improved. The data here should be no surprise. Given the cooling job market, there are more eager job-seekers who are more receptive to recruiter outreach if a promising opportunity shows up!

Our data also shows that while 22.6% of sequences see replies, only 12.1% of sequences see interested replies. In other words, around 50% of replies are of the "thanks, but no thanks" type.

Passive talent is more receptive to outreach in 2024 vs 2022





Sequence length: magic number 5

The data on the next page shows how open, reply, and interested rates evolve as you send more sequences.

No surprise here: Sending follow-ups increases your response rates and interested rates. A five-stage sequence, for example, receives 2x more replies and achieves nearly 68% higher interested rates compared to one-off emails!

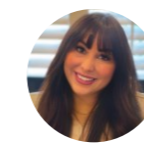
However, engagement starts to flatten after Stage 5. Open rates remain at 76.8%, reply rates remain at 22.6%, and interested rates stay at 12.6%. So, after the fifth stage, your email will likely be ignored, creating unnecessary work for your team.

Cold outreach continues to be effective! In contrast to 2022, 2024 open rates and reply rates for the first email are both higher (7% and 27%, respectively).

After your first email, you need to make the next ones count. After the first email, open rates are lower compared to 2022, but reply rates and interested rates are higher. So if your first email doesn't work, the second email may also present challenges. But if you do get the candidate's attention, they're more likely to be engaged and responsive.



“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.”



Angela Miller

Head of Talent Acquisition, Moloco
(Former Head of Recruiting, Instabase)



INSTABASE

Pro Tip

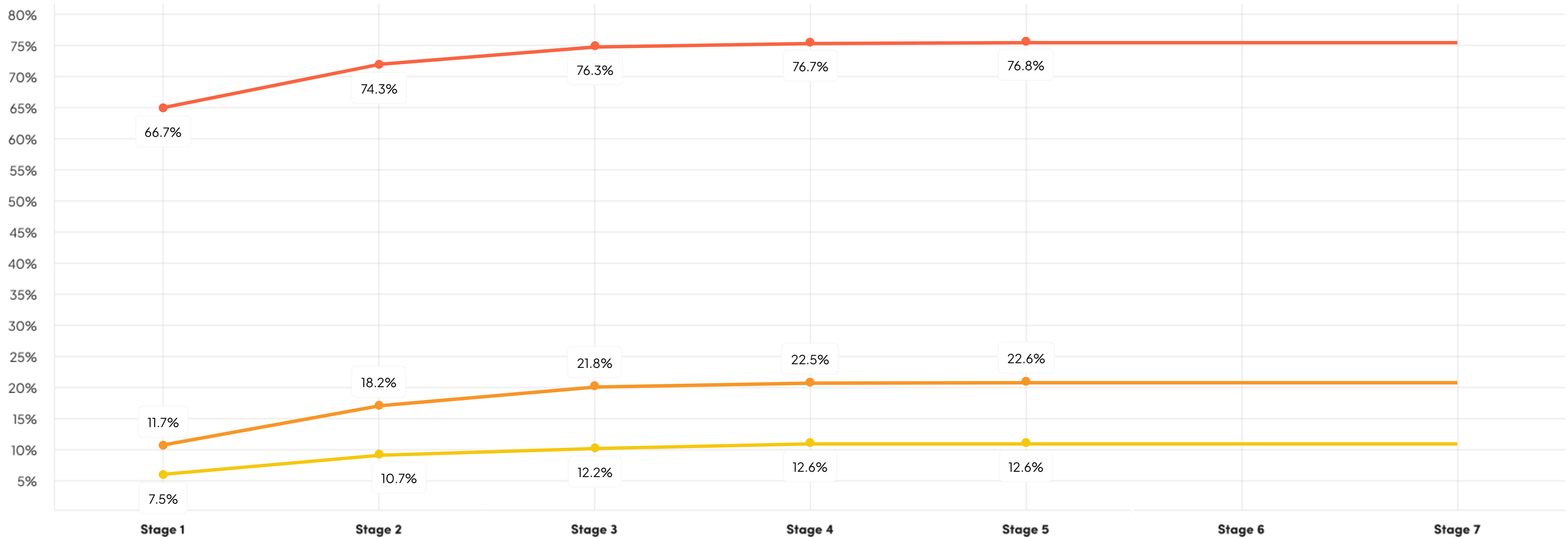
Long-term nurture after the initial sequence

Gem's 2024 data shows that around half the replies are of the “thanks, but no thanks” or “thanks, but not yet” type. This means they may be open to future conversations. Give prospective candidates some space, then continue to send emails with company updates a few times a year. 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 several months down the line!



Cumulative engagement rates by email stage

Open rate — Reply rate — Interested rate —





Spacing between sequences

Outreach cadence has remained fairly consistent over the last few years: recruiters typically allow 6 days between emails 1 and 2 and 6 days between emails 2 and 3 (in 2022, it was also 6 and 6, respectively). Spacing your sequences gives candidates time between stages to consider the opportunity that's being offered.



“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 two to three days later, the third about four days after that, and a fourth about a week or so later. When there’s more urgency in the market, our sequences are quick to roll out: two weeks or so.”



Alyssa Garrison

Talent at Linear (formerly Co-Founder at Techmate Talent)

“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





Optimal times to send the first and second follow-up email

Email 2: the best times to send are either one day after email 1 (12.4% open rate) or eight days after (10.8% open rate).

Email 3: the best times to send are either two days (8.2% open rate), four days (8.1% open rate), or six days (8.0% open rate).

Email	1 day after	2 days after	3 days after	4 days after	5 days after	6 days after	7 days after	8 days after
Email 1	Email 2 Best Time	-	-	-	-	-	-	Email 2 2nd Best Time
Email 2	-	Email 3 Best Time	-	Email 3 2nd Best Time	-	Email 3 3rd Best Time	-	-

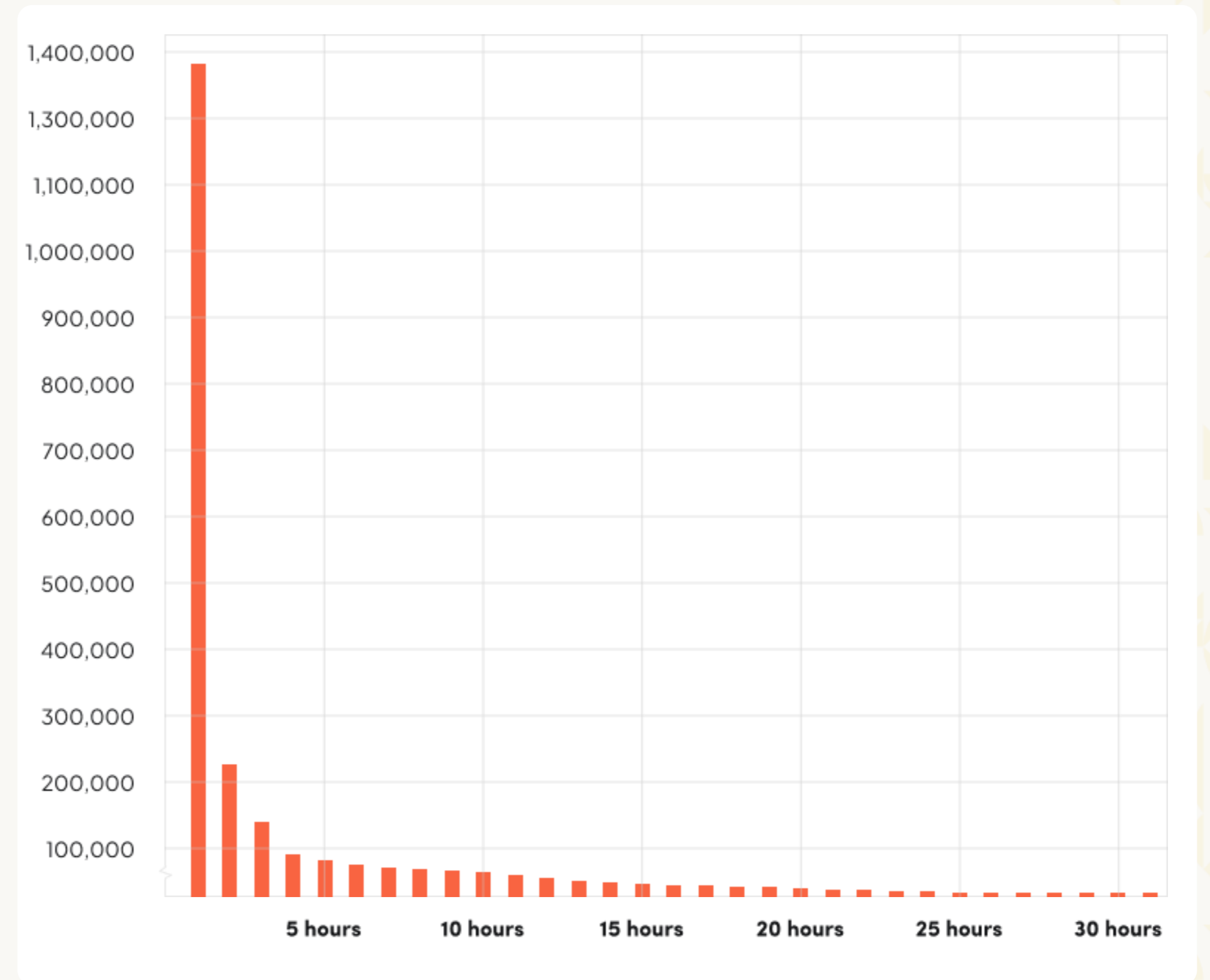


Send times: timing matters

50% of candidates will open your email within the first hour of send time. The longer it takes for someone to notice your email, the less likely they are to open it.

That's why we've shared benchmarks on send times below to help you strategically schedule your email to the right candidate, at the right time.

Opened emails by hours to open





Overall best send times by day of the week

Tuesday has the best open rates at 66.5%, followed by Wednesday, which has 66.4%. There's little variation Monday through Thursday, but Friday sees a small dip. Fewer emails are sent on Saturday and Sunday, but open rates remain steady on these days.

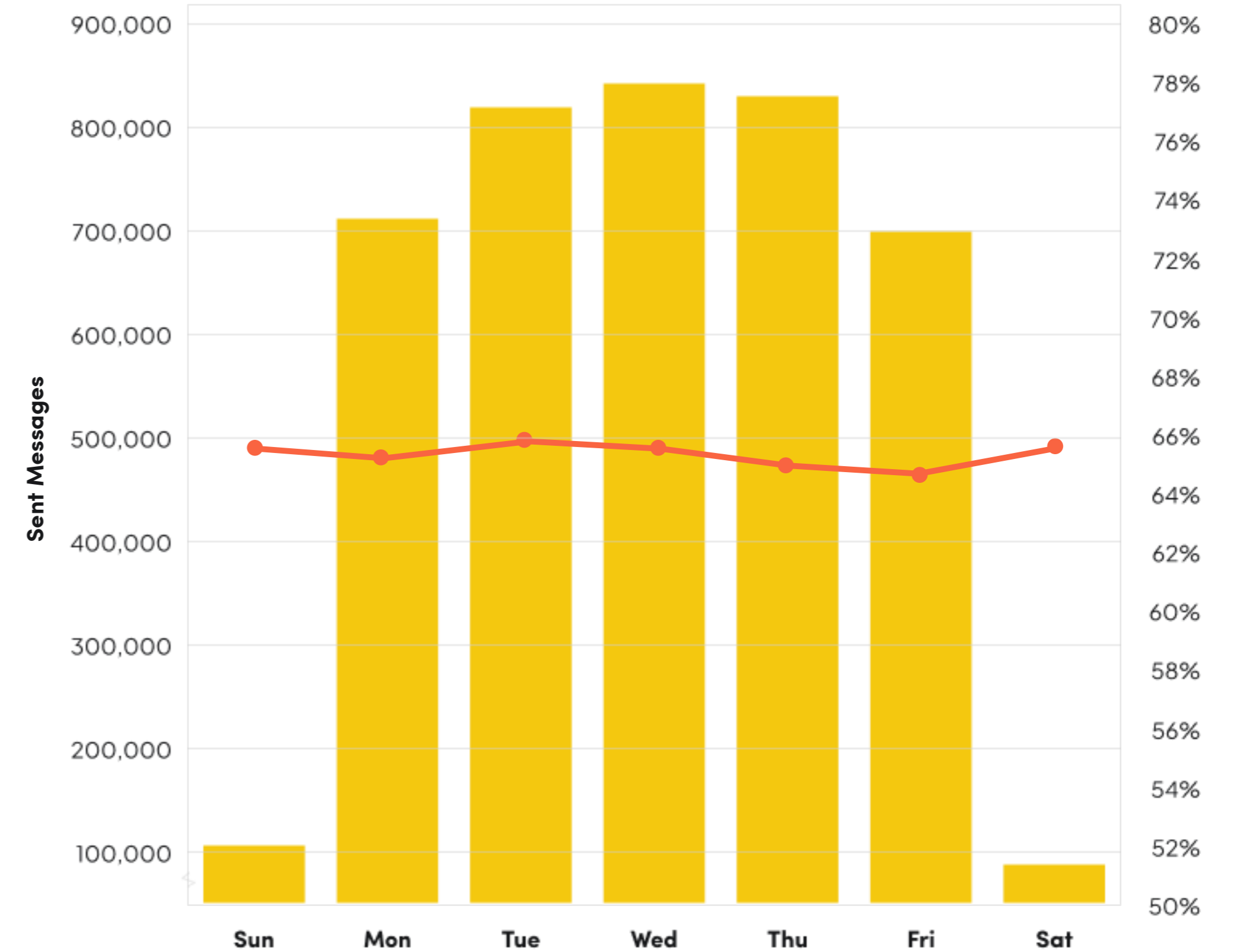
Pro Tip

Consider Weekend sends

Few recruiters send outreach on weekends, but the data shows these messages perform well ($\geq 66\%$ open rates!). If you can schedule set-and-forget outreach, we recommend experimenting with weekends. You'll either catch candidates when they have a free moment, while they're preparing for the week ahead, or first thing Monday morning.

Best send times

Open rate





Overall best send times by hour

Throughout the week, the best send times are 8am (68.0% open rate), 4pm (67.3% open rate), and 10am (67.0% open rate). Open rates remain relatively steady throughout standard working hours (9am–5pm) and start to drop off significantly at 8pm.

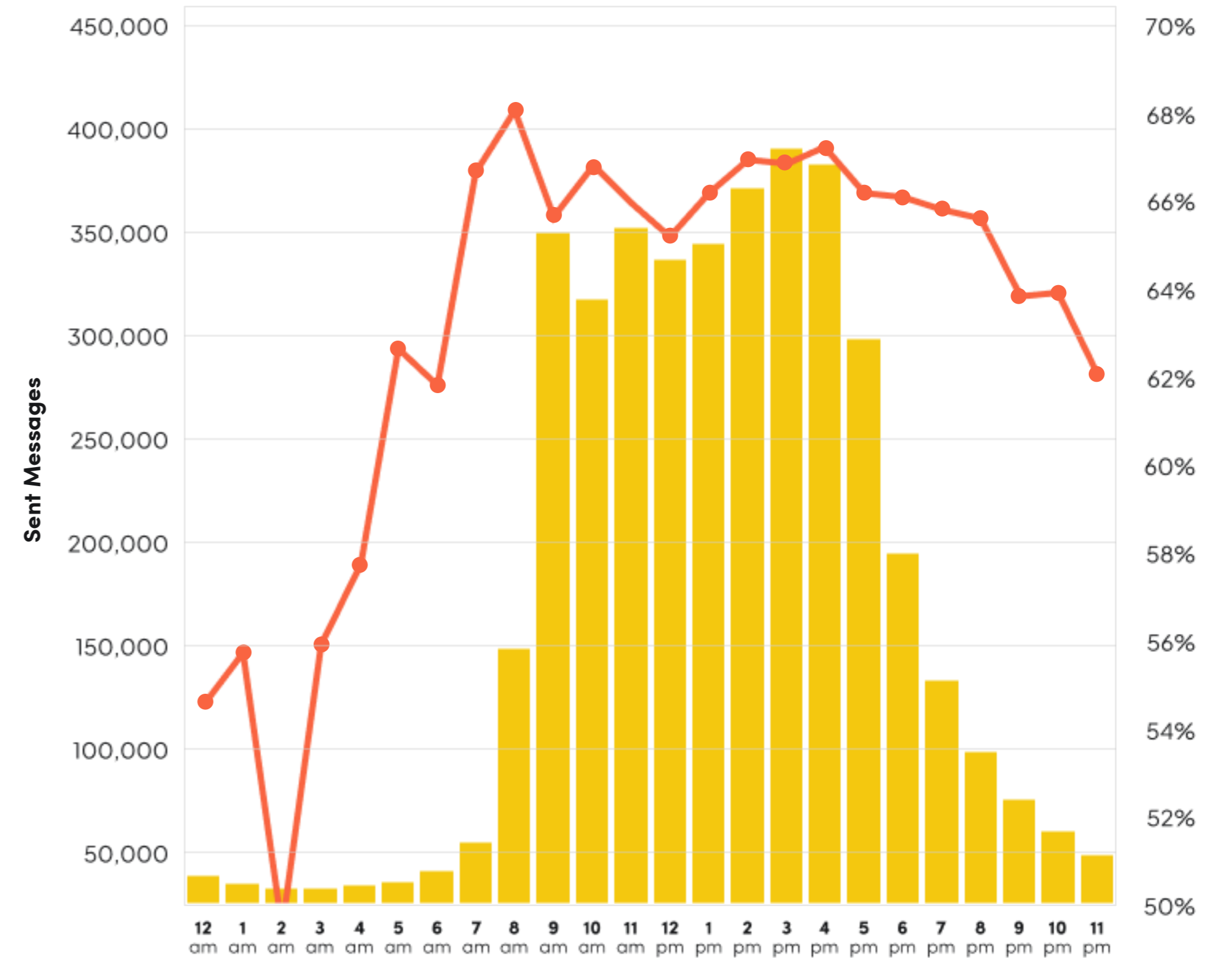
Pro Tip

Get them as they grab coffee

8am is not a popular time to send messages, but sees one of the highest open rates (68.0%). This is your chance to capture a candidate’s attention before they get distracted with work.

Best send times

Open rate





Best and worst send times by role type

Whether you're trying to reach technical candidates or non-technical candidates, one trend is clear: Weekends are best! For both tech and non-tech roles, three out of the top four times fall on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon or late evening. You can imagine these are times when candidates are relaxed and receptive to outreach. Tuesday mornings also see the highest open rates, perhaps because the workweek is well underway and candidates are ready for a little distraction.

One small exception to the "weekends are best" rule—Sunday early evenings (5pm and 7pm) are the worst times to send email outreach for tech roles. This may cut into family time or fall when candidates are experiencing the "Sunday scaries" and don't want to think about work or email at all.

For non-tech roles, early morning or late at night midweek see the smallest open rates. As a general rule of thumb, stick to typical business hours or weekends for the best chances of having your email opened.

Best send times

Roles	AVG Open Rates	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Tech Roles	71+	-	10am	-	-	-	-	3pm 4pm 9pm 11pm
Non-Tech Roles	66+	-	8am	-	-	-	2pm	2pm 3pm 9pm

Worst send times

Roles	AVG Open Rates	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Tech Roles	<66%	-	11pm	10pm 11pm	-	-	-	5pm 7pm
Non-Tech Roles	<54%	-	-	6am 11pm	12am 6am	12am	-	-



Best send days and times by job

Drilling down into specific roles, the overall trend is that weekends and Wednesdays tend to see the highest open rates, but there's still quite a lot of variation. Marketing roles, for example, see the highest open rates on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Mondays, while product roles see the highest open rates on Fridays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays and business development roles see the highest open rates on Monday evenings and Wednesday mornings and afternoons.

Roles	Open Rates	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Engineers	72+%	-	-	-	-	-	-	3pm 4pm 11pm
Engineer Manager	77+%	-	-	8pm	-	7pm	-	3pm
Data Science & Analytics	76+%	-	12pm	-	10am	-	-	11am
Marketing	78+%	5pm	-	2pm	-	6pm	-	-
HR & Recruiting	76+%	-	-	8pm	-	5pm 7pm	-	-
Product	81+%	-	9pm	5am	-	8pm	-	-
Sales	74+%	-	-	-	6am	6am	-	8pm
Design	81+%	-	-	12am	-	11pm	-	9pm
Business development	80+%	10pm	-	5am 1pm	-	-	-	-
Science & research	78+%	-	-	-	7am	8pm	2pm	-
PMM	83+%	-	-	-	7am	12am	11am	-

Part 2

What to say in your subject lines

There's a lot of pressure riding on your subject lines. They create a first impression and determine whether a candidate decides to engage with you or not. This section includes our tips and tricks for making the most of this limited and high-pressure space in prospective candidates' inboxes.



Best-performing subject lines

On this page you see the top-performing subject lines from Gem customers in the last year. Some of the noteworthy trends include appealing to the candidate’s values, asking questions, clearly outlining the next steps of the hiring process, sending event invitations and follow-ups, and highlighting specific aspects of the opportunity (or simply using the word “opportunity” also seems to work well!). Winning subject lines find the right balance between including relevant details while keeping the messaging concise.



“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
Recruiting Director, YEXT



Our customers’ best-performing subject lines (90+% open rates)*

Appeal to the candidate’s values

- Elevating talent acquisition together
- Flexible Technical Work

Ask questions

- {company} - Your application: When are you available to chat?

Be clear about next steps

- {first_name} + nspt 🌈 | hiring manager interview confirmed
- Additional information regarding {job title} and {company} search
- {company} virtual interview request
- {company} - screening interview
- next steps with {company}!

Send event invitations and follow-ups

- Nextplay San Francisco spotlight – tonight! (event details inside)
- {company} @Harvard | Thanks for coming!
- Thanks for visiting {company} at bfutr!

Highlight the opportunity

- {first_name} + {company} = Leadership Opportunity
- {company} - An exciting new job opportunity for you!
- {company} SRE role
- {first_name}, grow your {title} career at {company}!
- Announcing {company}: GTM executive search firm
- head of growth @ industry defining vintage marketplace growing 50% mom
- sr. software engineer opportunity - base-2 solutions

* At least 100 messages with the subject line had to be sent to qualify



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):

- Personalization is powerful: The first name token and the word “you” can make messages feel like they’re speaking directly to the prospect.
- Be clear right away: Sharing the job title and company name lets the candidate immediately understand what you’re reaching out about.
- Keep it conversational: Words like “hello” and “hi” keep your tone friendly and inviting.
- Tap into ambition: Using words like “lead,” “leadership,” and “build” can appeal to a prospect’s desire to take on the next big challenge in their careers.

"{company}"

"hello"

"role"

"{title}"

"you"

"build"

"@"

"software"

"hi"

"opportunity"

"series"

"leadership"

"{first_name},"

"opportunities"

"data"

"from"

"startup"

"lead"

"join"

"team"

"next"

"senior"

"new"

"ai"

"founding"



Using tokens in subject lines

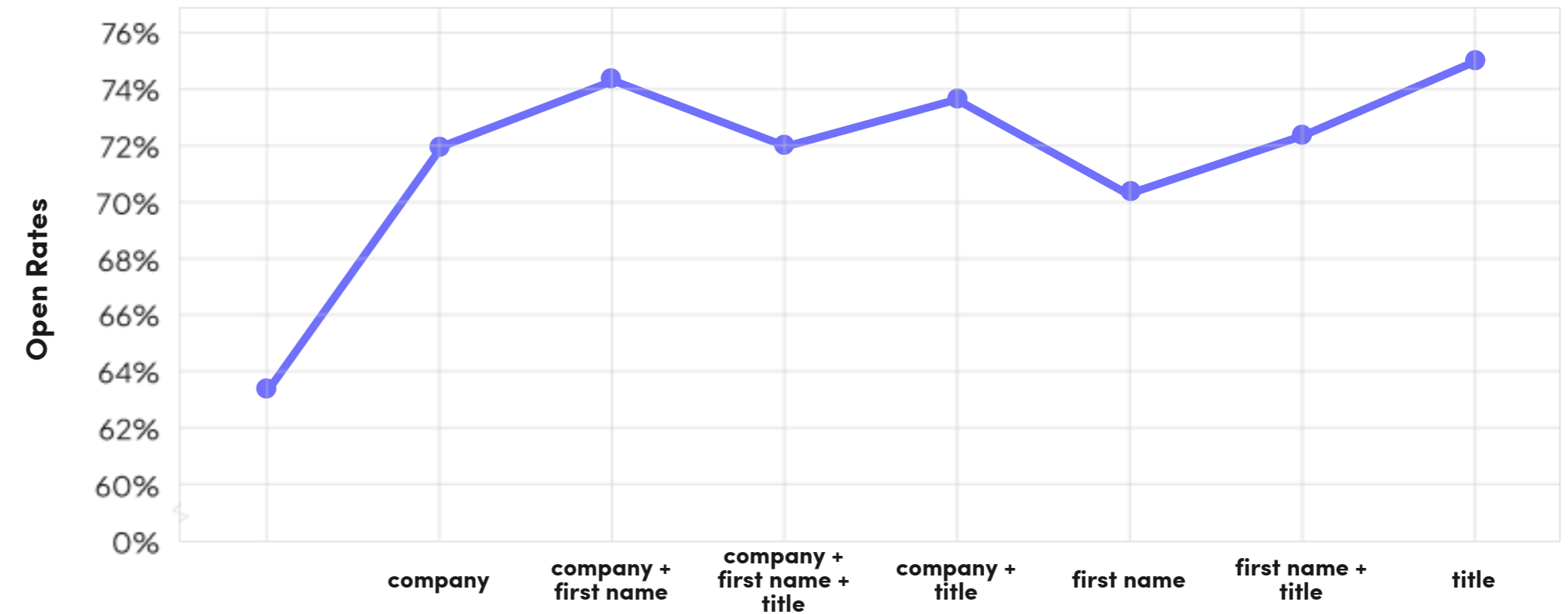
Teams should generally include at least one token in their subject lines. It can make a nearly 5% difference in open rates (in absolute terms), and which tokens work best for you will be well worth testing. Do your due diligence and research them—on LinkedIn, Twitter, GitHub, Medium, and elsewhere. Then drive opens with a personalization token—or if you don't use Gem, a manually personalized subject line.

Larger companies include the company name in the subject line. This makes sense since bigger brand names are more likely to capture candidates' attention.

Smaller companies are more likely to use the job title as a way of catching the candidate's interest, which makes sense since they may be able to attract them with a more impressive sounding title.

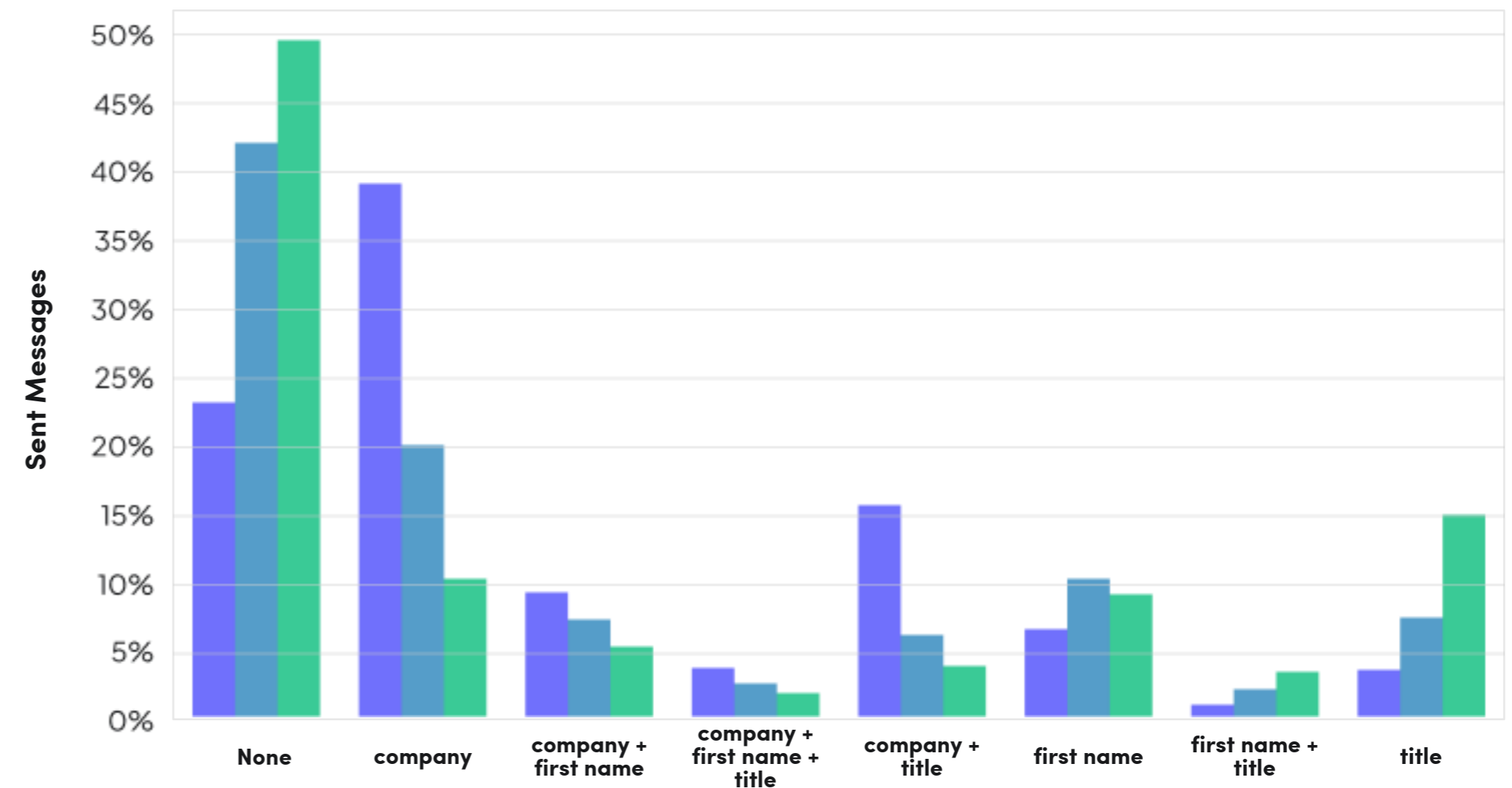
Overall, SMBs are the most likely not to include any tokens in their subject lines, which could be a missed opportunity to personalize their messaging and attract more candidates.

Open rates by token



Token usage by

Enterprise ■ Mid-Market ■ SMB ■

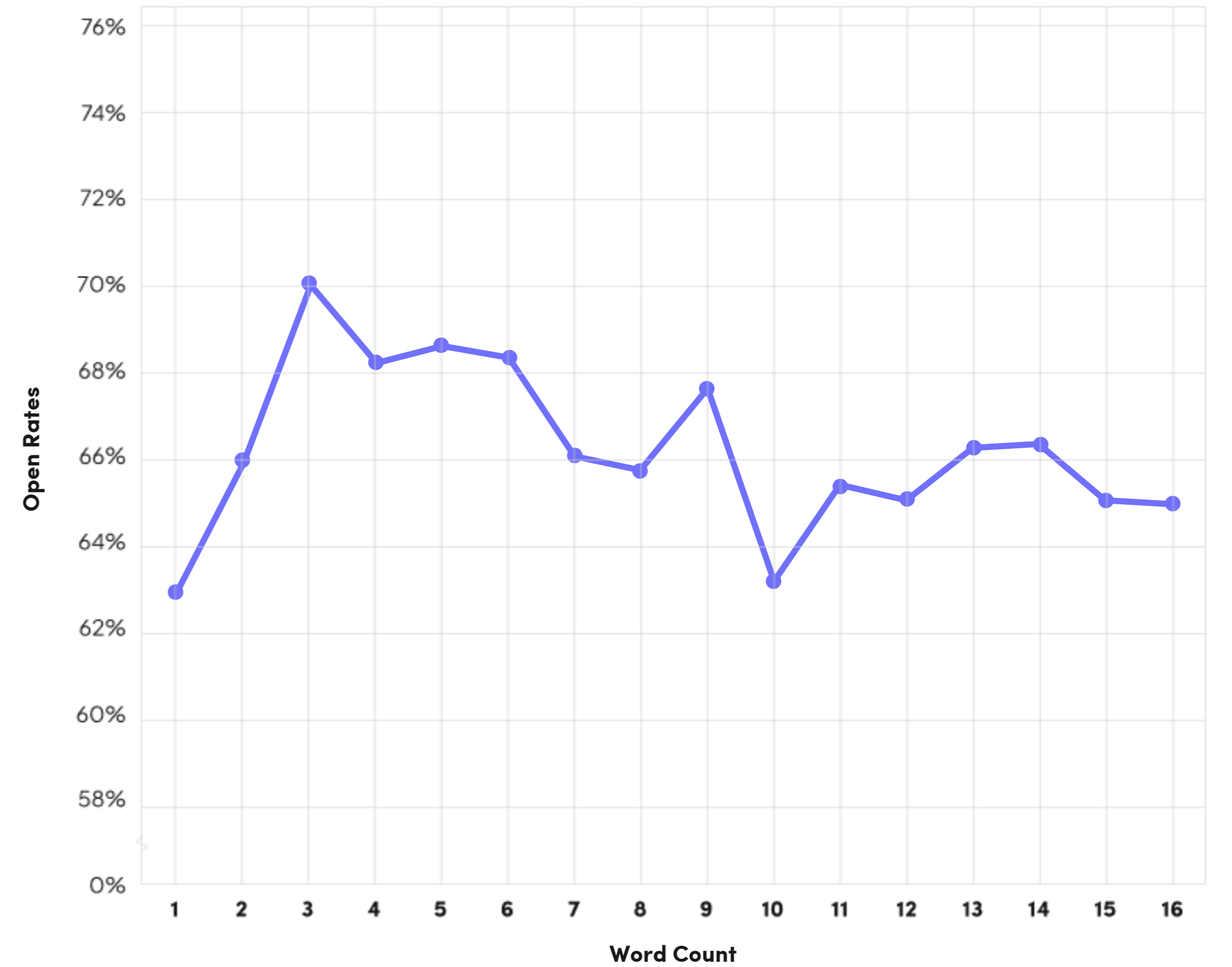




Keeping subject lines short and sweet

When it comes to subject line length, shorter is generally better. The sweet spot for achieving the best open rates is between 3 to 9 words, though some subject lines as lengthy as 11 words still see good open rates (if they're catchy!).

Open rates by subject line word count





General approaches to winning subject line strategies

When it comes to crafting your subject line, there are a few tips and tricks you might want to experiment with. Many of these suggestions—like appealing to curiosity and mentioning mutual connections—are proven copywriting tactics that are based on principles of human psychology.

Best Practice	Why it works	Example
Appeal to the candidate's values	Today's candidates crave connection and purpose	"Elevating talent acquisition together"
Appeal to the candidate's curiosity	Using ambiguity, uncertainty, or missing information motivates candidates to learn more	"Help us make the internet a safer place! (Career Opportunity)"
Be verb-forward	You're helping candidates visualize what success will look like in the role	"Play a pivotal & impactful role as our machine learning expert"
Ask questions	You're placing recipients in an instant dialogue with your email	"Want to join the next unicorn?"
Mention mutual connections	Having a common connection minimizes risk	"{{name}} recommended I reach out to you"
Indulge in a little flattery	Compliments give us a "mini high" that leave us wanting more	"Come be our expert marketer at {{company}}"
Infuse your language with personality	Adding a pun, pop culture reference, emoji, or touch of humor helps you to stand out	"Hello, Is it {{company}} you're looking for?"



Personalizing subject lines

If you're a Gem user, we recommend a short token in the subject line and a longer one in the body of your email. This could be 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.

Best Practice	Why it works	How to do it
Use your company name (even if you're a small or mid-size organization)	Our data shows that subject lines with company names + {{title}} tokens do well.	Mention your company name, your elevator pitch, your recent funding or release, or describe the possibilities of the role.
Use outreach stats to inform your subject lines	If it's worked before, it'll likely work again.	Dig into your own data. In Gem, it's as simple as filtering sequences to those with the highest open rates and discovering your own best practices from there.
Stick to the most important details	Shorter messages tend to perform better due to candidates' limited time and attention spans.	Include hyperlinks directing prospects to web pages on careers, diversity, and company culture so they can dig in more if they're interested.

Part 3

SOBO: Send-on-behalf-of

SOBO ("Send on behalf of") is where emails are sent on behalf of someone else in the company, often a hiring manager or executive. This approach adds a personal touch by using the credibility and authority of the person the email is "from." It can be especially effective because candidates are more likely to engage with messages that appear to come from a senior leader. This tactic drives higher response rates, as you'll see in a few pages.



“From” names – a critical element of any subject line

Over 20% 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.



“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.”

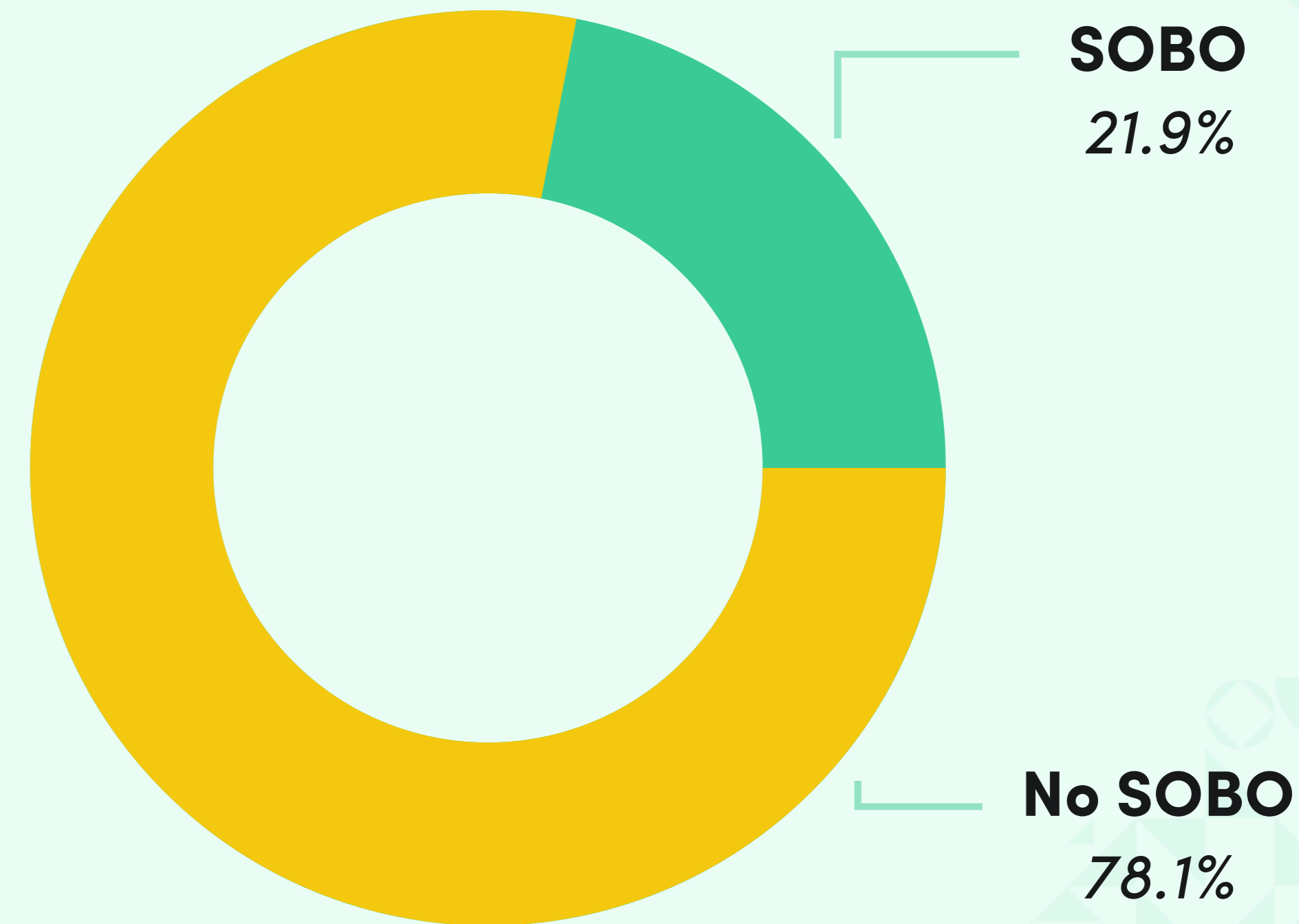


Joe Gillespie

Recruiting at OpenAI
(formerly Head of Technical Recruitment, Robinhood)



Overall Sequences Sent: SOBO vs No-SOBO



Pro Tip

While only 21.9% of sequences use SOBO, we find that using this tactic can increase reply rates by 50% or higher!



Use SOBO after stage 1

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.

Initial Stage	Was There a Response	Using SOBO in Follow Up Stage
Stage 1	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +9.2% open rate +13.7% reply rate
Stage 2	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +21.5% open rate +55.5% reply rate
Stage 3	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> +23.4% open rate +54.1% reply rate

Part 4

The email itself—what to say and how to say it

So you've found the ideal send time and cadence. You've crafted a compelling subject line that entices candidates to open. What should you say in the email itself and how should you say it? That's what we'll be covering in this section.



Message length: Err on the shorter side

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.

We’d recommend initial messages in the 101–150 word count range. 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.”

Remember: 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.

But don’t be afraid to A/B test longer messages, too. We’ve seen long messages do well—both for ourselves at Gem, and for our customers.



“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

Recruiting Manager, G&A at Anthropic
(formerly Senior Recruiter, Business Strategy & Operations, Robinhood)

Robinhood

“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.”



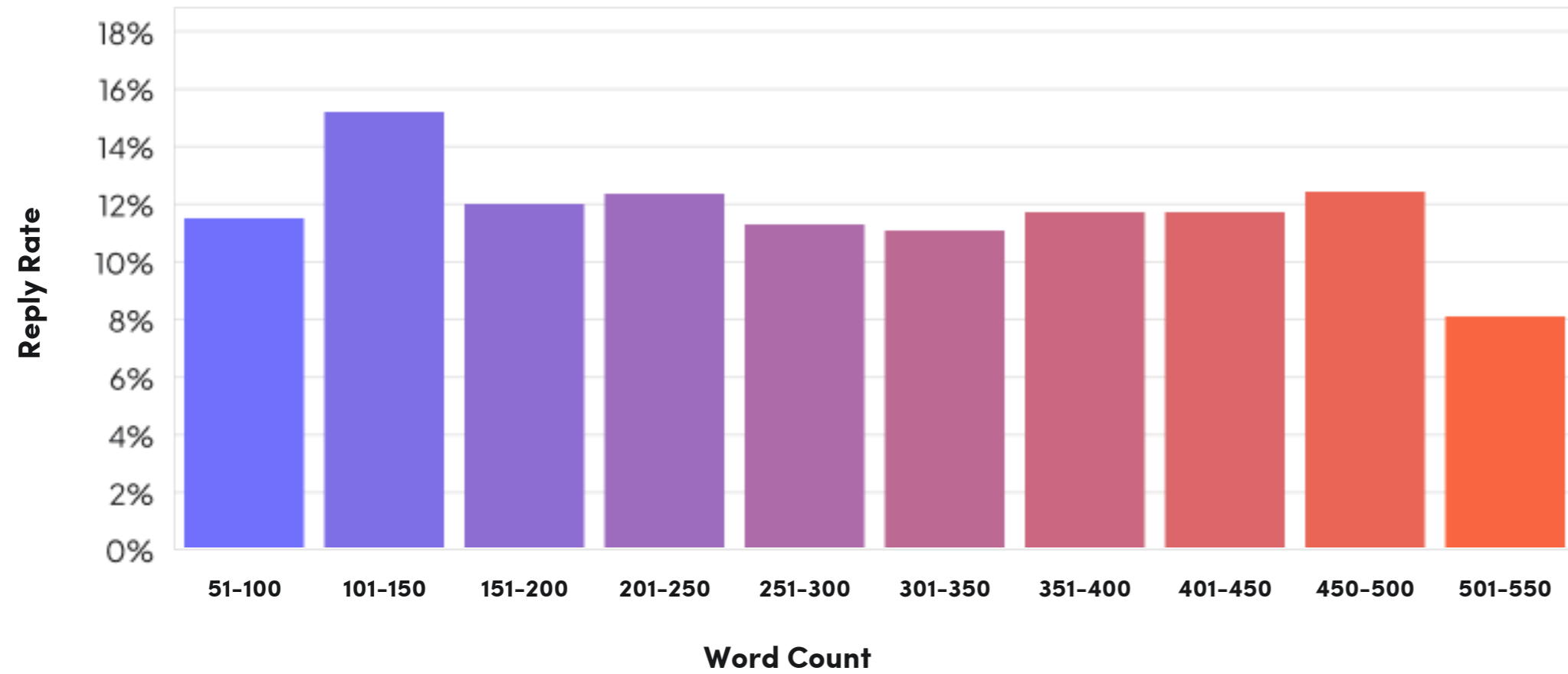
Jaime Onofre

Recruiting Manager, Zapier

_zapier



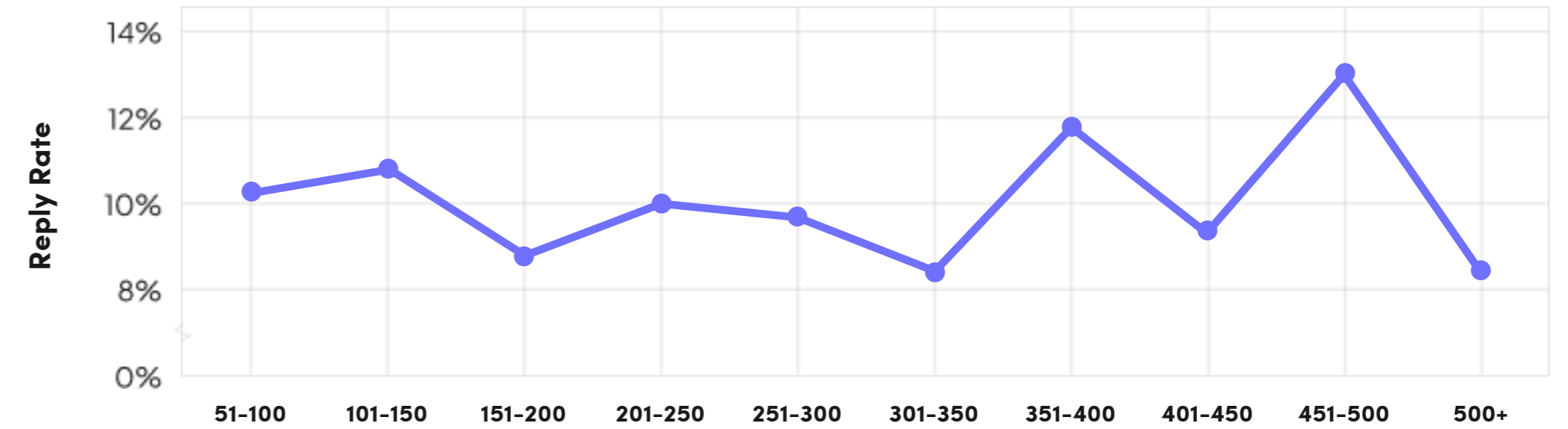
Reply rate by email body length



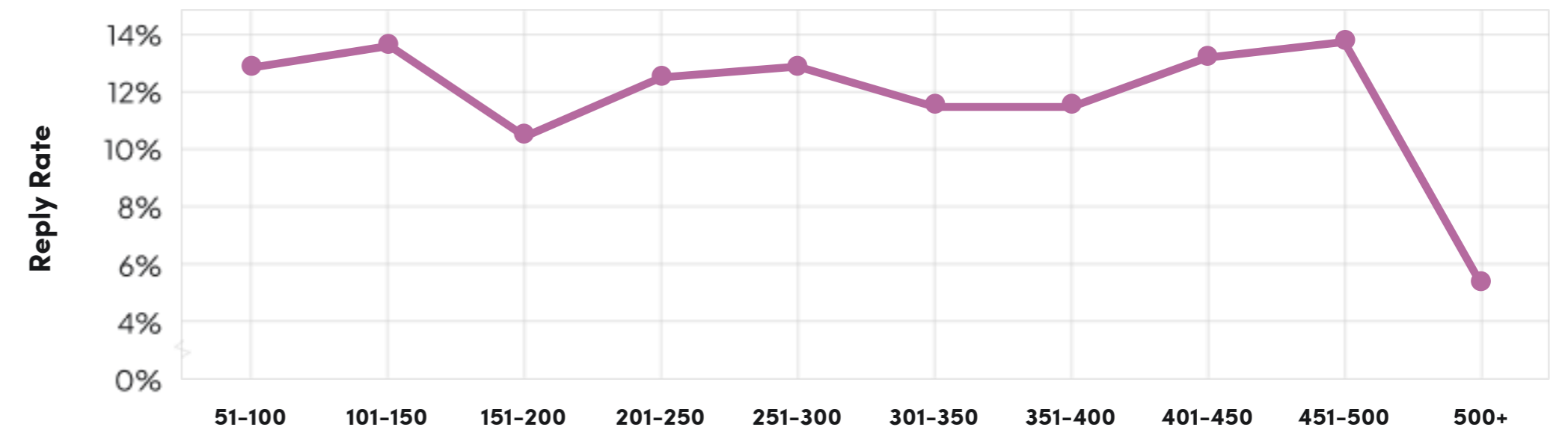
Here’s how reply rates as a factor of word count break down by company size:

In terms of response rates, slightly longer messages seem to work better for SMBs, giving them the ability to explain the opportunity in more detail. Shorter message lengths work well for enterprise companies, likely because they have recognizable brands. Mid-market companies reflect the overall trend of either short (around 101–150 words) or longer (around 451–500 words) emails working better than those in the middle range of length.

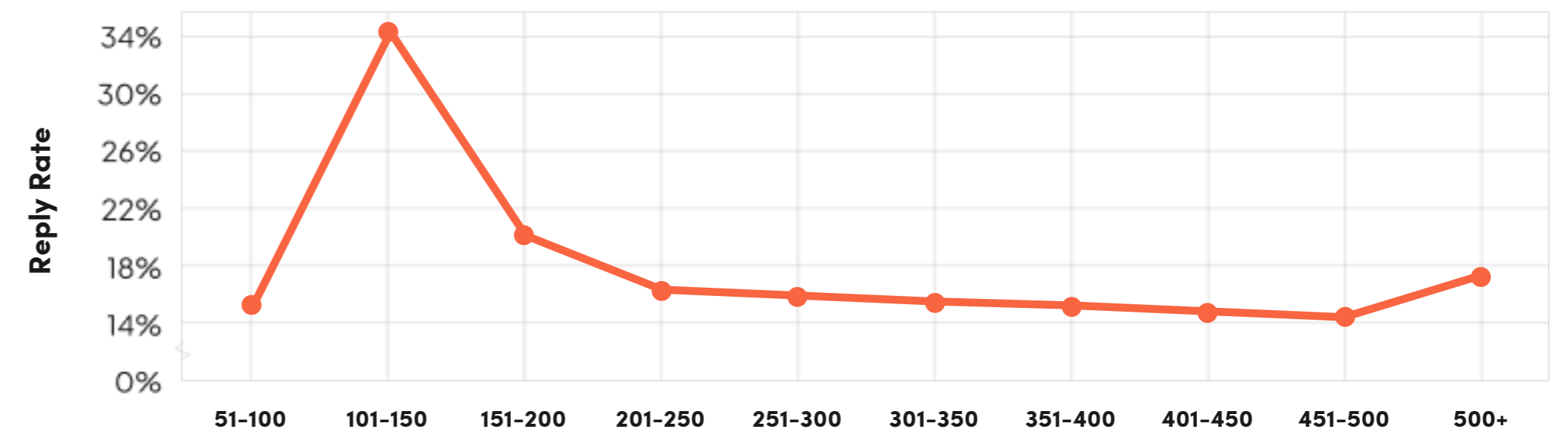
Reply rate by email body length [SMB]



Reply rate by email body length [Mid-Market]



Reply rate by email body length [Enterprise]





Message content: speak to what candidates care about most

Generally, it's a good rule of thumb to put yourself in the candidate's position. What do they want and need to know, especially in initial outreach? Describe why this is a great opportunity for them and what makes your company and this role attractive rather than sending them a list of requirements.

It's worth taking a moment to acknowledge some of the specifics of the current talent market, since these things are always fluctuating and may influence whether your messaging is likely to resonate or fall flat. In 2024, the top reasons candidates are starting job search include career advancement, greater work flexibility/remote work opportunities, and better company leadership.

We're also seeing a growing number of Gen Z employees enter the workforce (Gen Z and millennials combined will make up about 58% of the global workforce by 2030). Gen Z is 36% more likely to prioritize advancement opportunities and 34% more likely to prioritize skill development opportunities than other generations.



“We need to really understand what our candidates are looking for—from impact to partnership to collaboration—and then make sure we're offering an experience that highlights who we are as a company. Candidates need to feel welcomed, sought after, and like hiring is not just a cookie-cutter, conveyor-belt process.”



Mike Moriarty
Operating Partner



“We're not trying to sell anything in our outreach. 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 Director of Recruiting





Best Practice	Good	Bad
Keep it concise	Share highlights of what makes the opportunity interesting	Paste the entire job description
Be selective about what you include	Try to capture the candidate’s curiosity in as few words as possible	Spend paragraphs describing exactly what the job will involve
Focus on the candidate’s perspective and opportunities	Explain why this job might appeal to the candidate, why you think it’s a good fit, and what they’ll be able to accomplish (e.g. build a team from scratch, make an impact)	Include a laundry list of all the required skills for the role
Mention your company’s mission and culture	Briefly describe the daily experience at work and provide links to resources where they can learn more	Leave them guessing about what day-to-day life is like at your company
Offer social proof	Share articles or quotes from their perspective peers	Expect candidates to only want to hear your perspective (they tend to be distrustful of recruiters)
Highlight what today’s candidates value	Focus on flexibility, career advancement, and company leadership	Provide a laundry list of basic benefits like health insurance and PTO
Tailor your messaging to Gen Z (when appropriate)	Share resources related to skills development opportunities, company values, and diversity & inclusion	Assume Gen Z candidates have the same priorities and preferences as millennials or other generations

Pro Tip

Use 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”). Messages that use a `{{reason}}` token achieve 47% higher response rates than those without. The takeaway? Deep personalization—explaining to a candidate why you’re reaching out to them specifically—will be well worth your time.

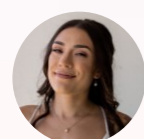


Personalize as much as possible

Our data found that highly personalized messages saw a 73% engagement rate, while reply rates for somewhat personalized outreach were no better than reply rates for outreach that wasn't personalized at all. What does it mean to highly personalize your outreach? Start with one to two details unique to the prospect in the opening paragraph. Follow that up with a full paragraph that outlines what you know about their work and how you believe their skills and experience would make a terrific fit for your company. This tactic is especially critical for connecting with highly sought-after talent (diversity candidates or leadership roles, for example), or talent pools in which there are only a small handful of people that are qualified for the job.



“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 ins and outs 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 Jamison (Duran)
Talent Acquisition Manager



To: You

From: Your Sourcing Coach

Subject line: DON'T do this. Please!

Hi there,

First of all, you're doing a great job on trying to improve your sourcing game. You already know and follow a lot of the best practices (high five for that!), but I wanted to send a quick reminder of what NOT to do when it comes to your outreach emails:

- 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. 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.

Happy hiring!

Your Sourcing Coach

Part 5

Putting data in the driver's seat

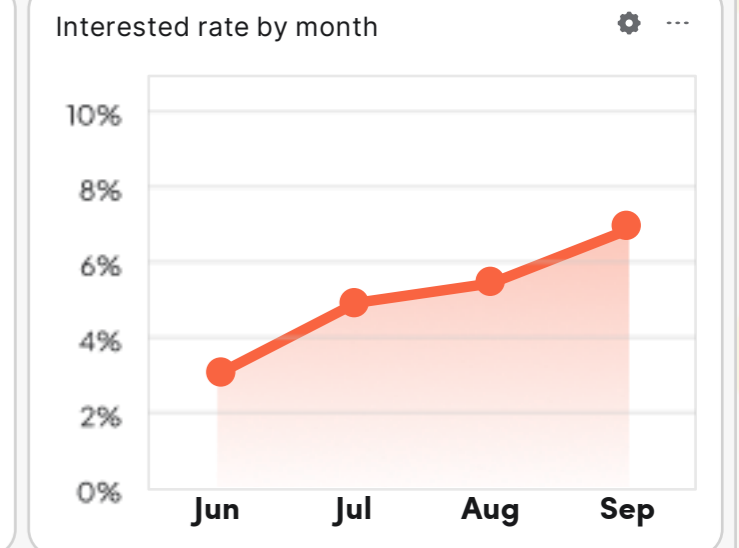
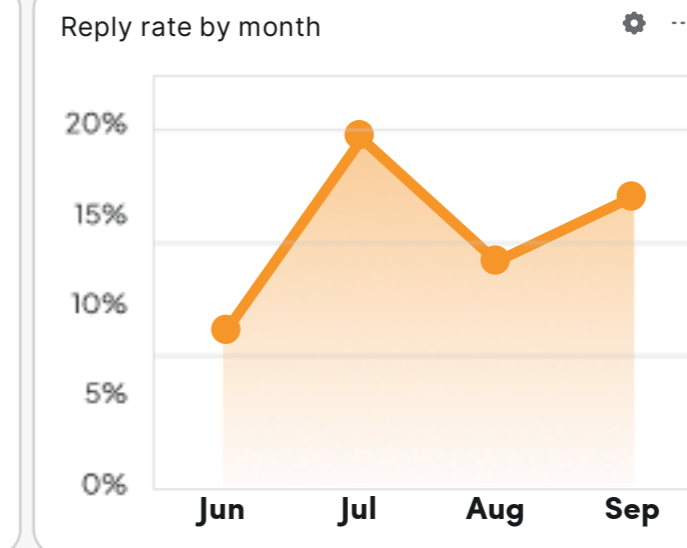
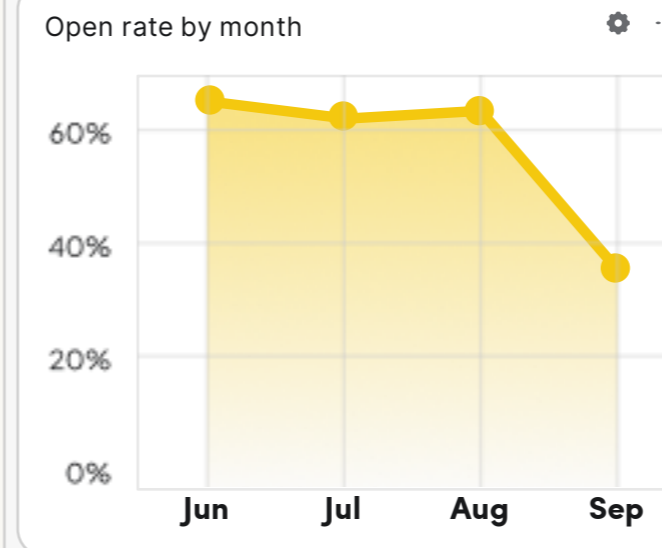
Throughout this guide, we've shared proven best practices and tried and true tips from TA pros. But now it's time to let you in on a little secret: One of the most impactful things you can do is to put your own data in the driver's seat. Regularly check in on the performance of your subject lines, sequences, and individual messages. You can use the tips we share in this section as a starting point, but make sure you regularly monitor your own data and make adjustments accordingly.



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 can, review 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.

Sourcing KPIs



Outreach activity

Outreach activity by sequence

NAME	FIRST MESSAGES SENT	FOLLOW-UPS SENT	REPLIES RECEIVED	INTERESTED CANDIDATES	CONVERTED TO PROCESS
SWENYC	1233	2083	350	116	75
SWESF	805	1501	249	120	87
AE Midwest	1403	2653	150	75	55
AE South	934	1305	353	120	76
PMM	785	1100	227	111	45

Top performing content

Title

CONTENT LINK	SEQUENCES	RECIPIENTS	REPLIED	CLICKED	REPLIED & CLICKED
Home page	35	5281	897 (17%)	500 (9%)	256 (5%)
G2 reviews	23	4583	1054 (23%)	705 (15%)	458 (10%)
Company awards blog	45	6000	1500 (25%)	1200 (20%)	1000 (17%)
Instagram profile	78	7501	975 (13%)	375 (5%)	235 (3%)
Life at Gem webpage	34	3505	1682 (45%)	700 (20%)	506 (14%)



Consider which elements of your email outreach are 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 also offer actionable insights. Exceptional open rates mean you've hit upon compelling subject lines; great click-through rates mean you're linking to interesting content.

These metrics should inform your judgment 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. Tone can't really be measured by metrics, but the questions are still worth asking.



“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 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 the CTO and said, now we know you need to do more podcasts. Clearly this is a powerful talent attraction strategy for us. It's not like, well, my instinct says this is working, but I have nothing to show for it.”

Greg Troxell

Head of Talent Operations, Midi Health
(formerly Recruiting Manager, Wheel)





Outreach analytics checklist

- 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 in 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's 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?

Part 6

Examples of great recruiting email outreach

In this section, we've curated a few best practices and shared some examples to illustrate what these ideas might look like in practice. Think you can do better? We bet you can! Our goal is to give you some inspiration and a jumping off point, but we'd encourage you to make unabashed edits so the wording sounds more like your own voice and highlights what's relevant to your candidates.



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) at your company. Tell them as much. It'll flatter them, yes. It'll also make you look instantly trustworthy.

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

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 {{extra}} 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.

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

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.)

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

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.



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 your company's mission or culture.

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

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?



Offer social proof

“Social proof” is the psychological phenomenon in which people look to others to determine what to do 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 we’ve recently interviewed have said [X]”). The point is to give voice to those people top talent most want to hear from. Candidates are three times more likely to trust company employees (rather than the employer itself) on what it’s like to work there. So link to your careers page, your about page, or a page on company culture where employee quotes are featured—or highlight employee sentiment in the email itself.

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

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.



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.

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

Hey {{first_name}},

Are you starting to think about a new jumping off point for your career? [company name] just got named on the 2024 Career-Launching List and I’d love to chat with you about growth and learning opportunities here.

Thanks!

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

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’ attention. 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.

To: Candidate

From: Recruiter

Subject line: ...

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.

How Gem can *help*

Gem is the AI-powered recruiting platform TA teams love. Use Gem as your all-in-one recruiting platform or enhance your existing ATS with integrated products for CRM, sourcing, scheduling, analytics, career sites, events, and more. Over 1,000 companies – from startups to industry leaders like Airbnb, Wayfair, Cintas, Carmax, Doordash, and Zillow – trust Gem to hire with speed and ease. See why Gem is the industry’s most beloved solution, with a 4.8/5 rating on G2.



Simplify your tech stack and cut costs

Consolidate multiple tools into one platform and reduce spend on recruiting technology, job boards, and ads.

Customers like Veho and Prestige Care save hundreds of thousands by reducing their reliance on agencies and other sourcing platforms. Our larger enterprise customers like Airbnb and Wayfair use Gem to search for qualified talent in their ATS, accounting for ~50% of their sourced hires.

Attract, engage, and hire talent faster

Build high-quality pipelines across all channels through sourcing, nurture, events, career sites, inbound, and more. With Gem, teams can source talent 5x faster with easy, 1-click add and 2x talent pipelines with a stronger employer brand.

Our customers like Celestica have used Gem to hire over 700 employees in just 90 days.

Maximize recruiter productivity

Use AI and automation to save time on routine tasks like reviewing applications, scheduling, and managing follow-ups.

With Gem, recruiters spend half as much time on routine tasks like reviewing applications, scheduling, and managing follow-ups. Our customers like Procore, Robinhood and Octave have all saved hundreds of hours a month for their recruiters.

Unlock data-driven recruiting

Visualize hello-to-hire analytics to debug your funnel, monitor pipelines, forecast hiring, and demonstrate impact, with data anyone can use. Our deep ATS integrations and no-code analytics interface have allowed teams like Unity pinpoint and address bottlenecks, resulting in a 10-day reduction in time-to-fill.





Thank you.

Gem is the AI-powered recruiting platform TA teams love. It helps you maximize productivity, hire faster, and save money – all while giving recruiters a solution they find easy to use.

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

