



The Ultimate Corporate Communications
Internal Email Broadcast
Best Practices Guide

Informed By The Data Analysis of
Over A Billion Internal Emails



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It's not your imagination - employees aren't reading your emails. But why? After analyzing billions of internal emails sent to millions of global employees, we identified a series of common trouble spots limiting the impact of most corporate messaging. We want to help you change your communications strategy for better engagement and higher read rates from your recipients. Just click on the best practices below, and let's start improving your email communication, fostering deeper connections with your team, and inspiring them to take action.

► Internal Email Best Practices

1. Send From a More Specific Email Address
2. Send to Smaller, More Targeted Audiences
3. Write Subject Lines That Are Short and Timely
4. Arrive at the Top of the Inbox
5. Write Less and Make it Simple
6. Use More Words, and Less Banners, in the Preview Window
7. Get More Clicks by Sending Fewer Links

► What are the Top Communicators Doing Differently?

► How PoliteMail Can Help You Increase Employee Engagement

Glossary of Terms

Common terms and metric definitions used throughout this guide. Please note that the PoliteMail software automatically removes undeliverables (out of office replies, bounce backs, etc.) from the final metrics. The metrics are calculated from recipients who successfully received your sent message.

Attention Rate: Attention Rate is calculated from the number of people who have opened the message and read for more than 3 seconds of the total read time. Low attention rate indicates issues with the subject line, time and date sent, or from address.

Click-Through Rate: A click is an individual recipient who clicks at least one link in the email message. To calculate the click rate, the formula used is $\text{Clicks} / (\text{Sent} - \text{Undeliverable})$.

Effective Rate: Effective Rate is the ratio of Clicks to Opens, which indicates how effective the call to action was at getting clicks, and counting only recipients who opened the email. It excludes the recipients who ignored the email and measures the recipients who both opened the email and clicked a link. The calculation is $\text{Click Through Rate} / \text{Opens}$.

Email Engagement: Engagement measures interactions with the sent email, combining the percent of the content read together with click activity, if links are included in the message. Factors which impact engagement include reading ease, authenticity, content relevancy, presentation, message length, and link effectiveness.

Email Reach: Reach is defined as the percentage of the audience that has received, opened, and paid a minimum threshold of attention to a message. Those who immediately deleted or skipped the message are not counted. The primary factors which impact reach are list accuracy, measurement accuracy, From address, subject line, inbox timing, and preview content.

Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease Score: A measurement of how easy a text is to read based on the number of words, sentences, and syllables it contains. Grade level is an estimate of the education level a person needs to understand the text.

Ignored: Ignore Rate is calculated from individual recipients who opened an email but had the message open for less than 3 seconds.

Open Rate: Opens are a unique count of messages opened at least once by an individual recipient out of the total number of sends. This includes messages previewed in the reading pane in Outlook. The calculation used is $\text{Opens} / (\text{Sent} - \text{Undeliverable})$.

Preview Pane: (Reading Pane) Displays the sender, subject line, and first few lines of text in an email message without having to open it.

Quintile: A quintile is a statistical value of a data set that represents 20% of a data set, so the first quintile represents the lowest fifth of the data (1% to 20%); the second quintile represents the second fifth (21% to 40%) and so on. PoliteMail benchmark data is divided into quintiles and assigned a grade.

Read: Read Rate is calculated from individual recipients who had the message open for at least 30% of the content length, calculated by the number of words in the email. It is the sum of all non-ignore or skimmed opens. Read Rate is a much more accurate metric of how readers engaged with the content than Open Rate.

Readership: Readership measures how much time recipients spend viewing the message, categorized into groups by minimum threshold (Read, Skimmed, Engaged, Left Open). Readership shows how much time recipients spent with the message, and determines if the majority of the messages were read, skimmed or left open. The primary factors which impact readership are relevant subject lines and preview content, layout and design formatting, writing and images, message length and delivery timing.

Skim: Individual recipients who had the message open for less than 30% of the content length.

personalization, and consistent branding than chat and app platforms, building trust and credibility. Additionally, unlike chat platforms - where important messages can quickly get buried in an active discussion - emails remain unread until opened. While they still may get buried, missed messages are easier to identify, find, and process.

The platform is also hard to beat when it comes to integration and multi-functionality. Since email supports calendar functions, task management, and contact lists, it serves as a hub for employees' daily communication activities. Plus, email is easy to measure, particularly when using tools like PoliteMail that help measure reach, readership, and engagement across different audiences.

But if email is as powerful a tool as we say it is, why are your engagement numbers so low? More specifically, why aren't employees opening, clicking, reading, and springing into action?

While blaming the platform itself is tempting, that's an oversimplification. In truth, organizations inadvertently limit the potential of email through common missteps.

Corporate emails are often excessively long, lack attention-grabbing subject lines, are overrun with links, are sent to all-employee lists with non-relevant content, and are sent at random times and on random days. And this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Email works. You just need to learn how to use it to its full potential. And that's exactly why we created this guide.

This guide is your key to unlocking the true potential of email. It will empower you with strategies, best practices, and the data-driven insights needed to make email a strategic ally - one that connects, engages, and inspires action within your organization.



Send From More Specific Email Addresses

Sending organizational emails from a recognized and official email address builds trust, ensures credibility, and increases the likelihood of recipients opening and engaging with the emails.



Send to Smaller, More Targeted Audiences

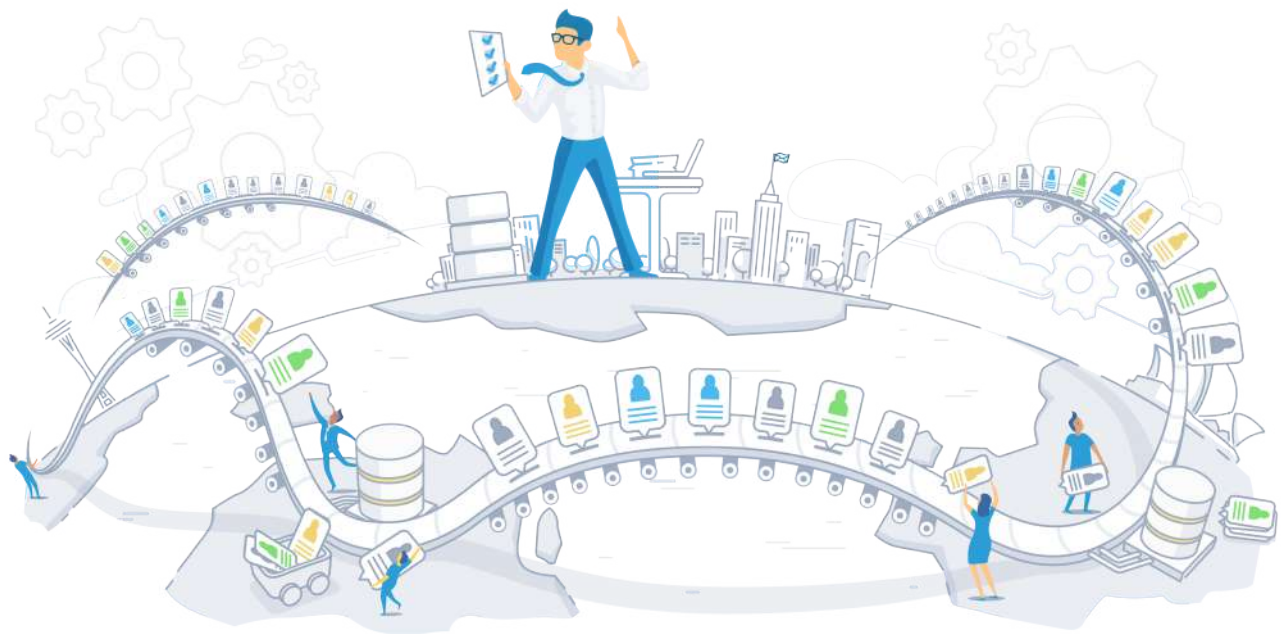
When you send messages, think about who will benefit the most from them within your team. This personal touch makes your messages more relevant and increases the chances of people actually reading and taking action.

How Your Email List Size and Targeting Impact Results

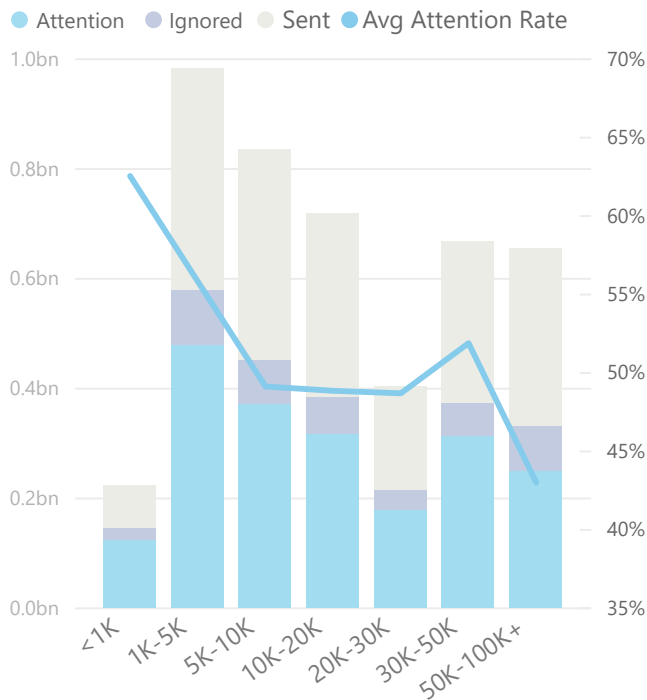
Let's talk about how the size and focus of your email distribution group can affect your outcomes. Emails sent to well-targeted audiences of 5,000 or fewer individuals usually lead to higher-than-average interaction rates. You might also notice a boost in rates among larger distribution lists with 30,000+ recipients. This could be because many customers in that group have been diligent about improving their list quality.

Keeping your list accurate and up-to-date generally leads to better overall performance. This helps address the "denominator problem," which stems from having numerous outdated or invalid email addresses on your lists. Simply put, the larger the denominator (i.e., outdated or invalid addresses), the lower your rates are likely to be.

Targeted messaging builds trust, reduces email overload, and shows employee engagement is a priority. Smaller lists translate into a focused audience, enabling you to create more relevant messaging targeting these audiences.

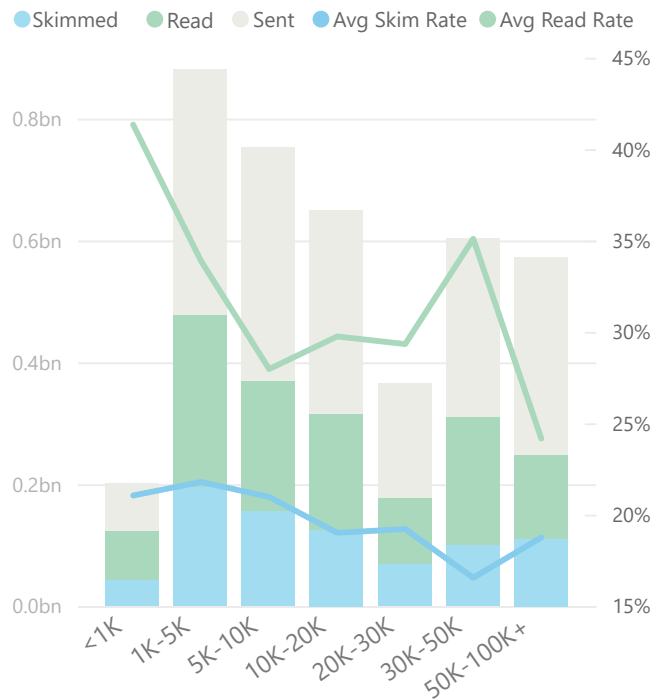


Attention by Distribution Size



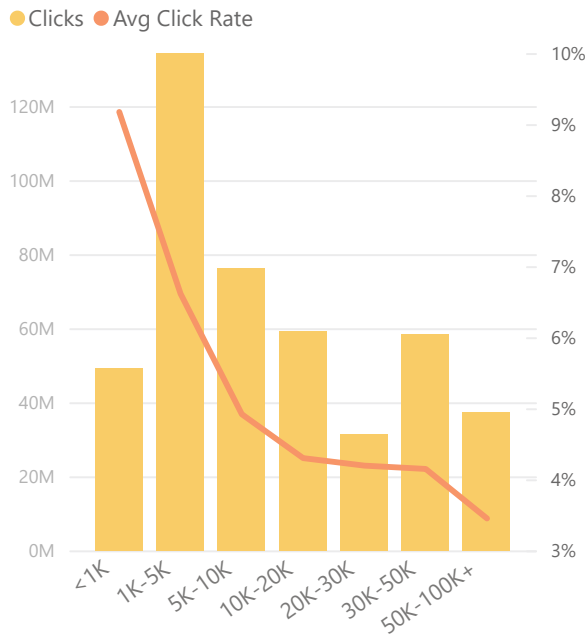
[Click to enlarge](#)

Readership by Distribution Size



[Click to enlarge](#)

Click Rate by Distribution Size



[Click to enlarge](#)

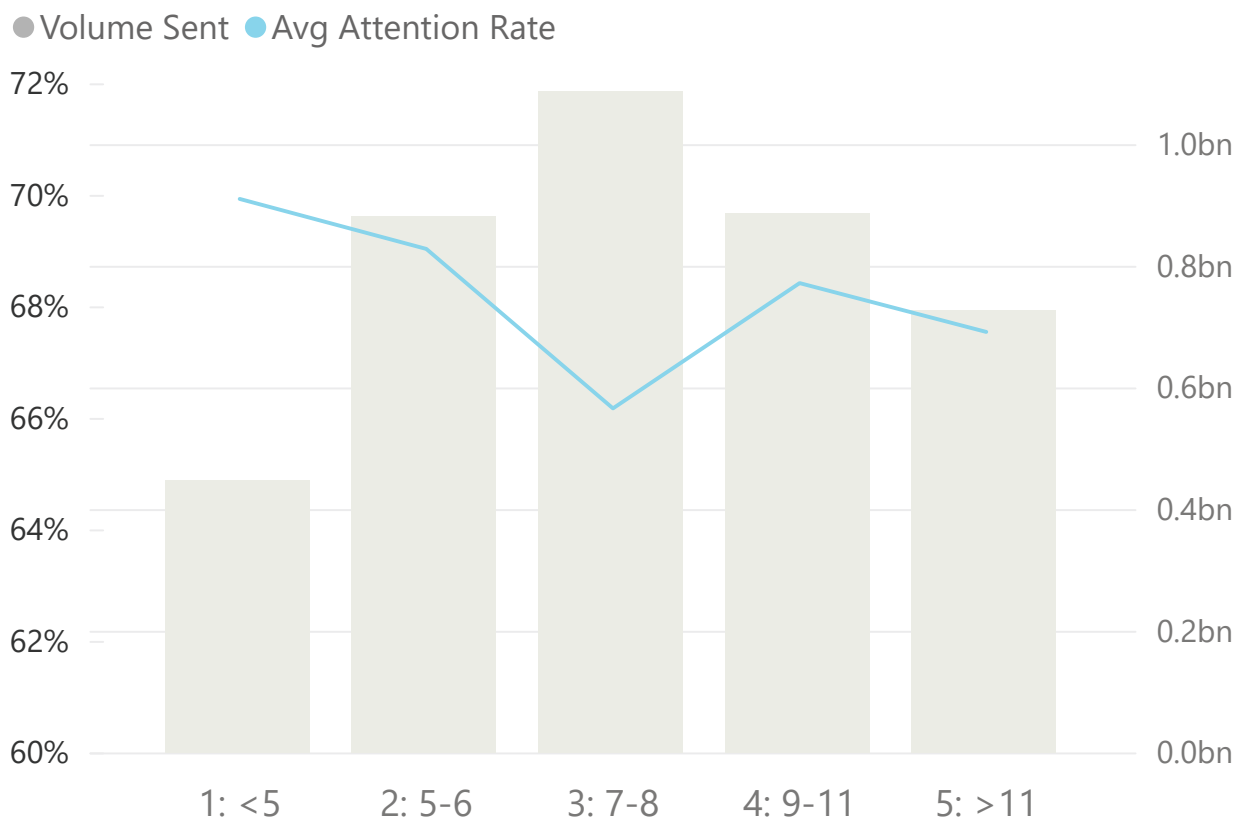
Generally, the larger and less targeted your distribution group, the lower your reach, readership and engagement will be.



How PoliteMail Can Help

With PoliteMail, users can send to distribution groups that already exist in their Exchange or Azure environment, no importing required. Users can also create further segmented lists within PoliteMail, or use our [SyncroNym](#) automated list management product.

Attention Rate by Words in Subject Line



Attention Rate is highest when the subject line contains around 5-6 words, although there is another spike around 9-11 words as well. As a best practice, try to write subject lines that fit into the preview pane in Outlook so recipients can see what the message is regarding.



How PoliteMail Can Help

Using PoliteMail's Ai/B Test feature, you can get recommendations from our Artificial Intelligence (AI) model to improve your current email subject line. The AI model can also compare two subject lines and predict which option will likely result in more opens.



Arrive at the Top of the Inbox

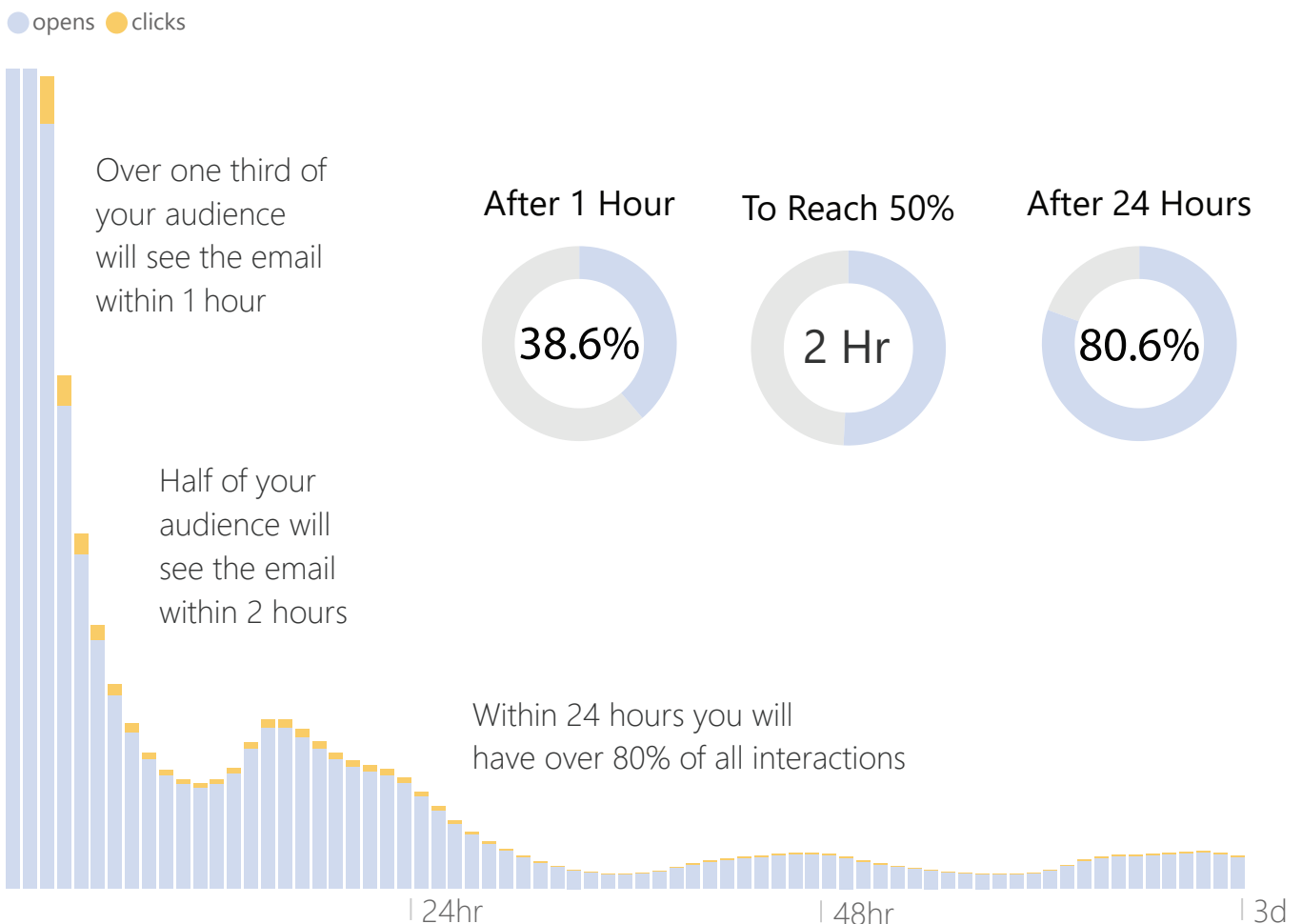
You only have 24 hours to make an impression.
Send emails early in the morning and in the
appropriate time zone, so messages appear
at the top of recipients' inboxes.

What's the Life Cycle of an Email Broadcast?

How long does it take for people to actually see the emails you send out? That depends on when you hit that "send" button. On average, around **39% of your audience will spot the email within an hour, 50% within 2 hours, and the majority, about 87%, will have seen it within 24 hours.**

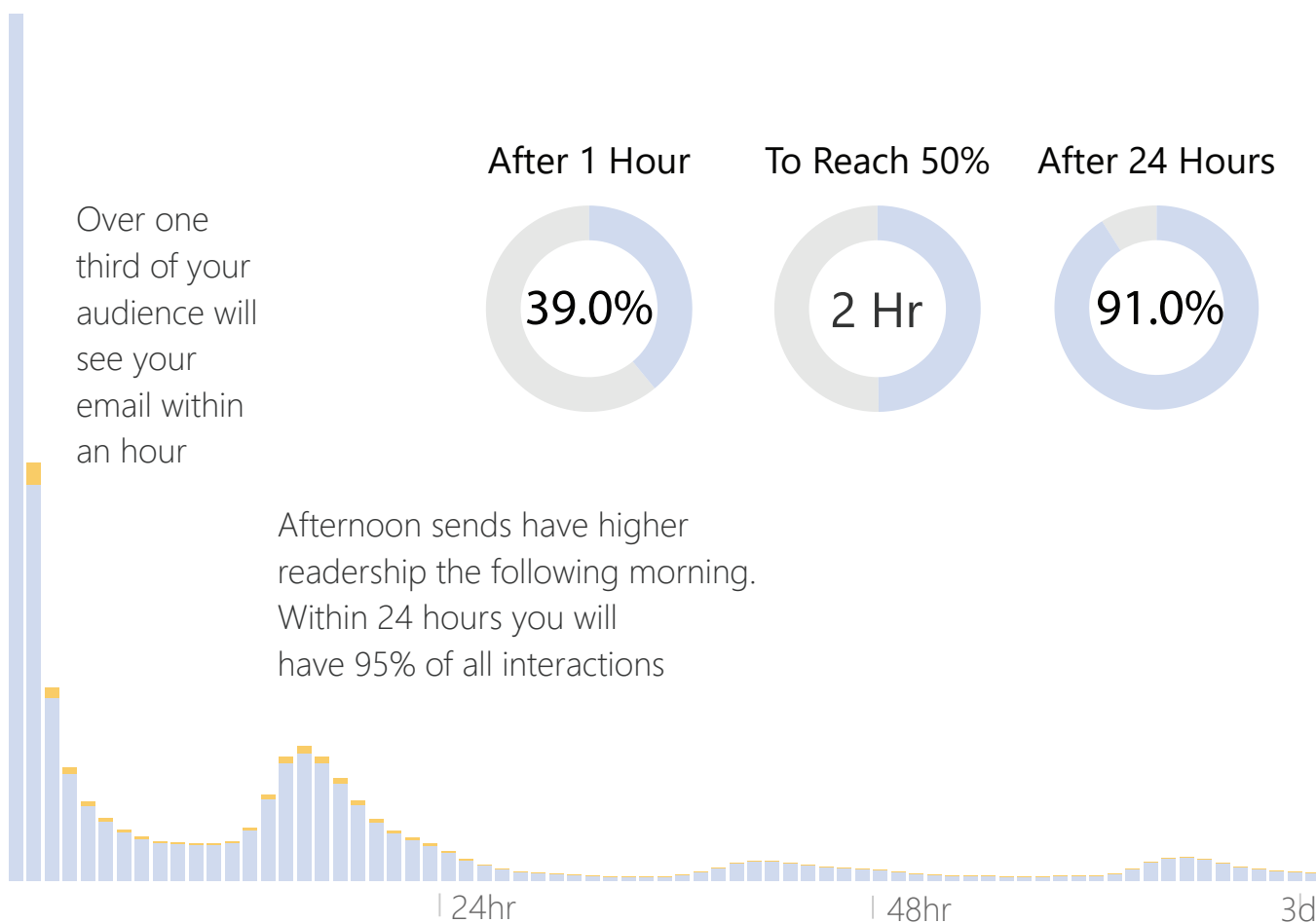
If you look at the graphs below, you'll notice that whether you send your email in the morning (before noon) or in the afternoon (between noon and 7 p.m.), both tend to have their highest readership about 16 hours after being sent. Given these email patterns, the ideal time to send a follow-up message would be **2 or 3 days after the initial send.**

Morning Broadcasts (63%)



Afternoon Broadcasts (37%)

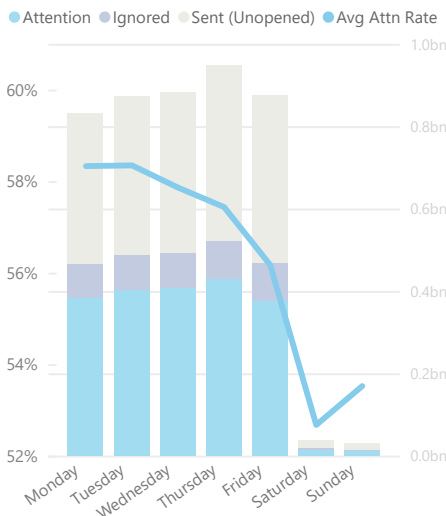
● opens ● clicks



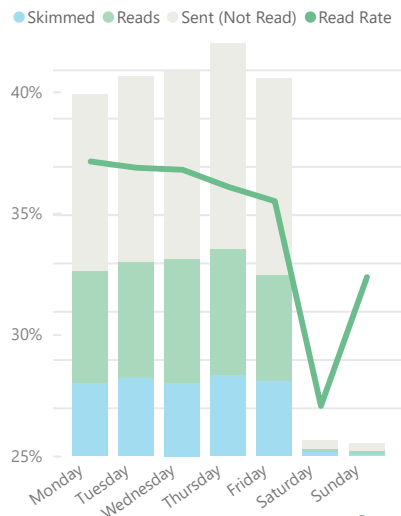
Is There an Ideal Day for Sending Emails?

The charts below illustrate email volume (represented by bars) and interaction rates (percentages, represented by lines). While Thursdays typically have the highest email volume, emails sent on Mondays consistently yield the highest levels of attention, readership, and click rates. Emails sent on Tuesdays also perform well. It's important to know your audience, when they're most likely to be checking their emails, and to make your emails easy to read on all devices.

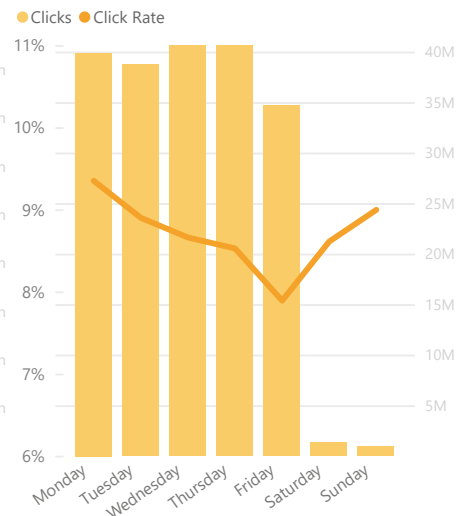
Reach by Day of the Week Sent



Readership by Day of Week Sent



Engagement by Day of Week Sent

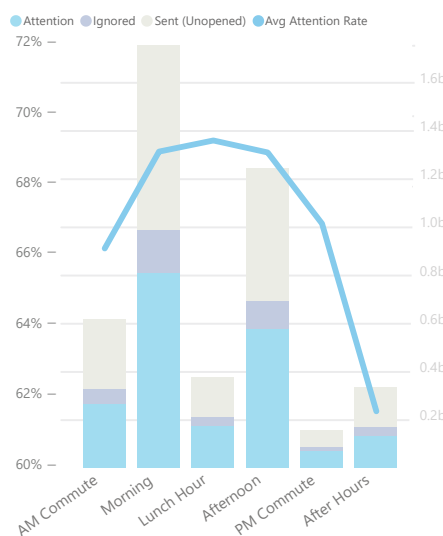


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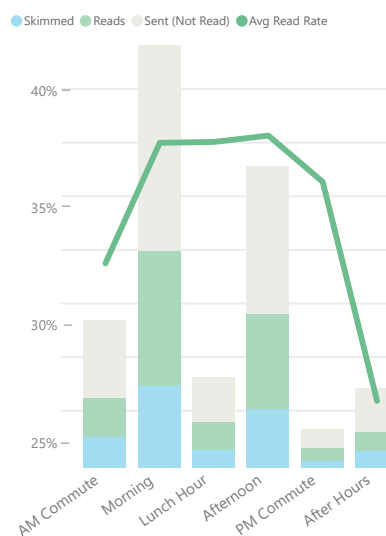
Is There a Best Time of Day to Send Emails?

While the majority of email broadcasts are sent in the morning, employee email activity in the afternoon has increased since employees have consistently been working from home. The bar chart below represents email activity volumes. As you can see, more emails are sent during the morning (56%) than in the afternoon (38%). Morning and afternoon attention and readership rates perform roughly the same. However, afternoon click rates are **0.5% higher**, reflecting a **6% increase** over morning click rates. As a best practice, schedule your email to arrive at the employee's inbox first thing in the morning, or first thing after lunch.

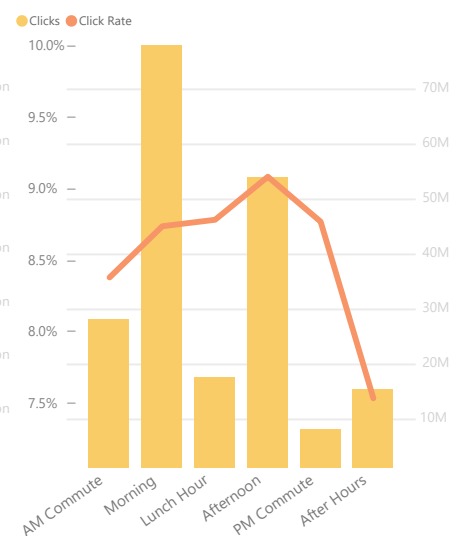
Reach by Time of Day Sent



Readership by Time of Day Sent



Engagement by Time of Day Sent

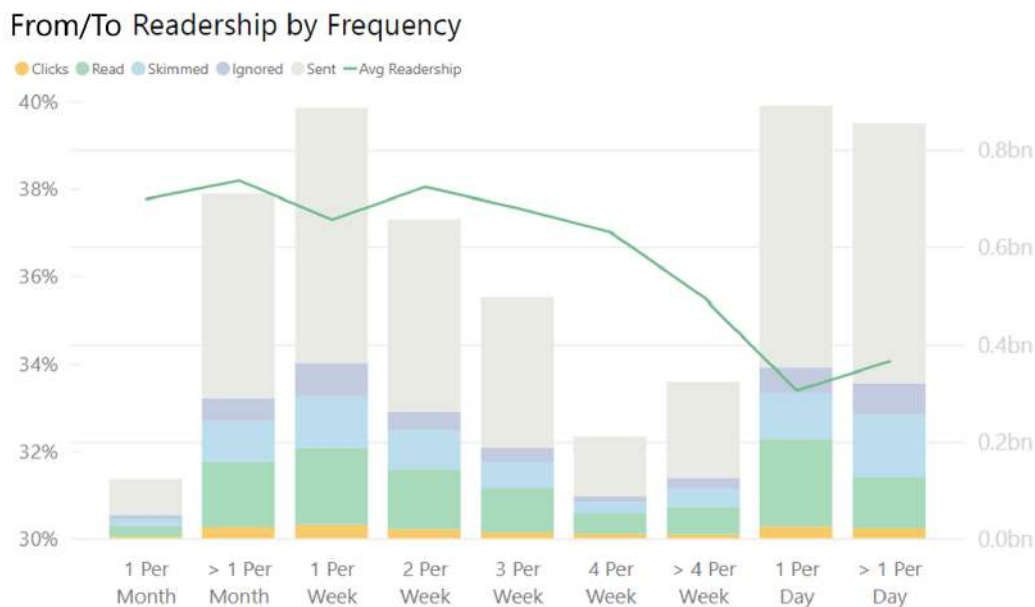


[Click to enlarge](#)

How Often Should You Send a Broadcast?

The bars below represent the total volumes for each frequency period for every From-To combination, and the lines are the respective rates. While the rates are not drastically different, this analysis does reveal the benefit of having unique From addresses for various message types. Novelty matters, as messages sent once per year garner **9% more attention** than messages sent once per week, which get **5% more attention** than messages sent once per day. Readership of quarterly messages is **5% higher** than weeklies, which have **9% more readership** than dailies.

But frequency alone does not tell the entire story, so let's also take message length into consideration in the next best practice.



How PoliteMail Can Help

The Schedule Send feature in PoliteMail allows users to schedule a measured message to be sent at a future date and time, in the employee's time zone, and during the employee's working hours. PoliteMail does not require the sender of the email message to be online at the time of release.



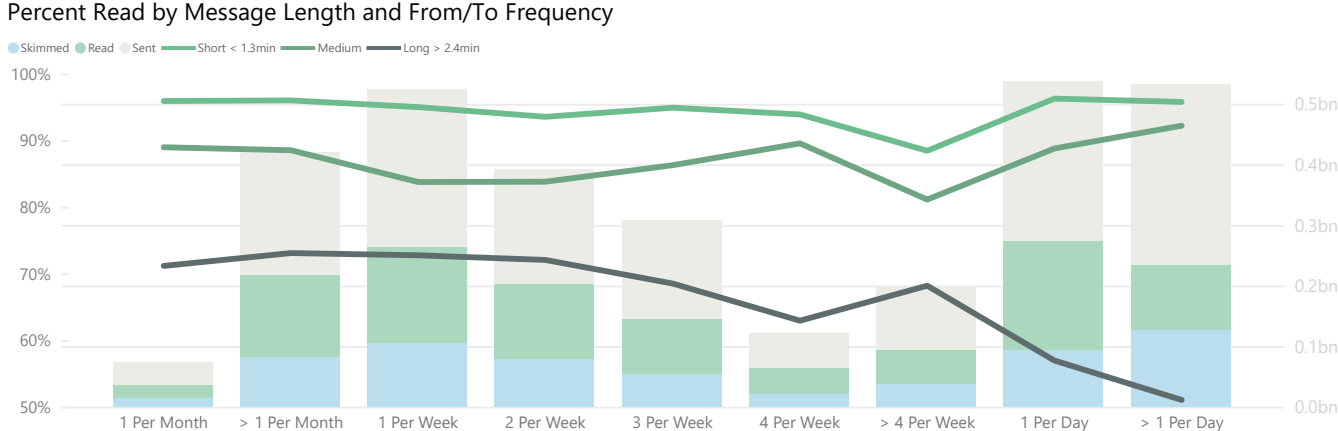
**Write Less
and Make it Simple**

Say a lot about a little. Keep your messages short and sweet, and use easy language anyone can understand.

How Does Message Length Impact Frequency Decisions?

When we consider message length alongside sending frequency, a clear pattern emerges: Short messages consistently outperform longer ones, especially as frequency increases. It's better to send shorter emails, more often, than more content less often.

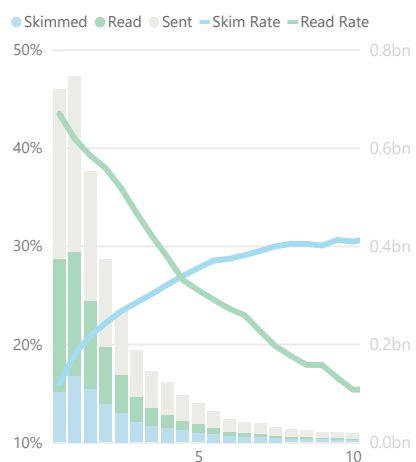
The bars below represent the volumes of the most frequently occurring From-To combinations, and the lines illustrate readership rates for three distinct message cohorts: short, medium, and long. Surprisingly, readership remains high for messages sent more than once per day, as long as they are kept short.



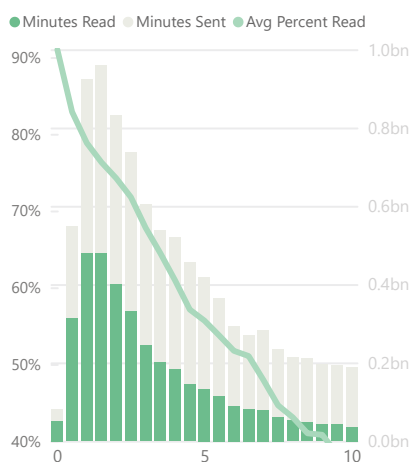
How Much Do Employees Actually Read?

The gray bars below represent the amount of email content sent (in minutes required to read), while the green bars show how much time employees spent reading - which is typically less than half of the content. This discrepancy worsens as emails get longer. The trendline illustrates that for every 500 words of content added, people read 20% less.

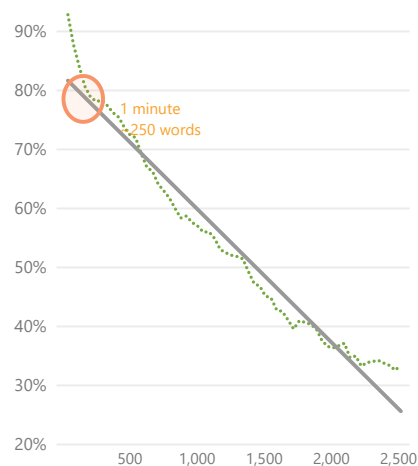
Minutes Sent with Readership Rates



Minutes Read with %Read



Avg Percent Read by Words



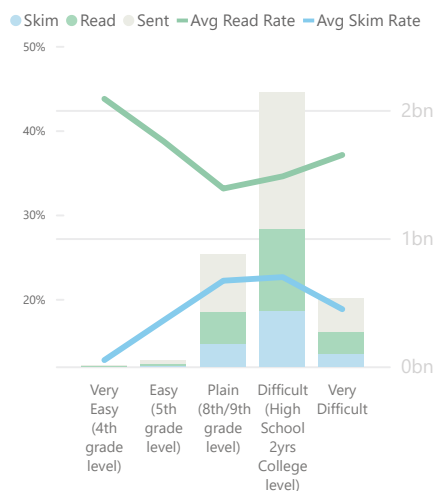
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Our conclusion? The optimal message length for the highest readership is typically under one minute, which equates to roughly 250 words or less.

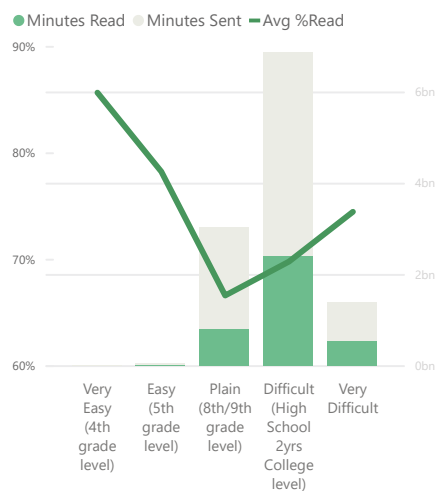
How Does Reading Ease and Grade Level Impact Readership?

The Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease score provides an approximate measure of English language readability, ranging from very difficult (0) to very easy (100), with an approximate educational grade level of a text. Short sentences and simple words yield higher scores, while complex language and company-specific acronyms decrease scores. On average, **very easy and very difficult texts perform best in terms of readership.** For clicks, **simpler language results in higher click rates.**

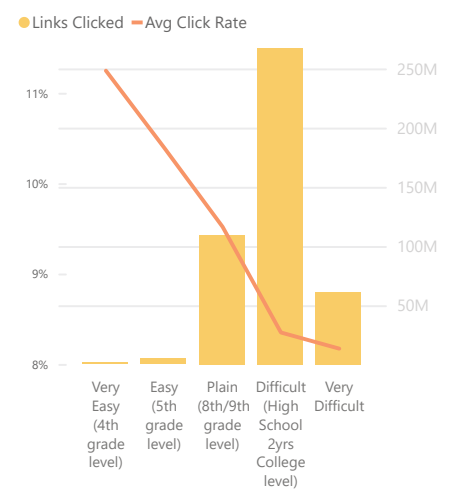
Readership by Reading Ease



%Read by Reading Ease



Click Rate by Reading Ease



[Click to enlarge](#)



How PoliteMail Can Help

PoliteMail is able to give you content metrics at a glance, including reading ease, reading score, and word count. The HeatMap feature allows you to see which parts of your emails your recipients found most engaging.

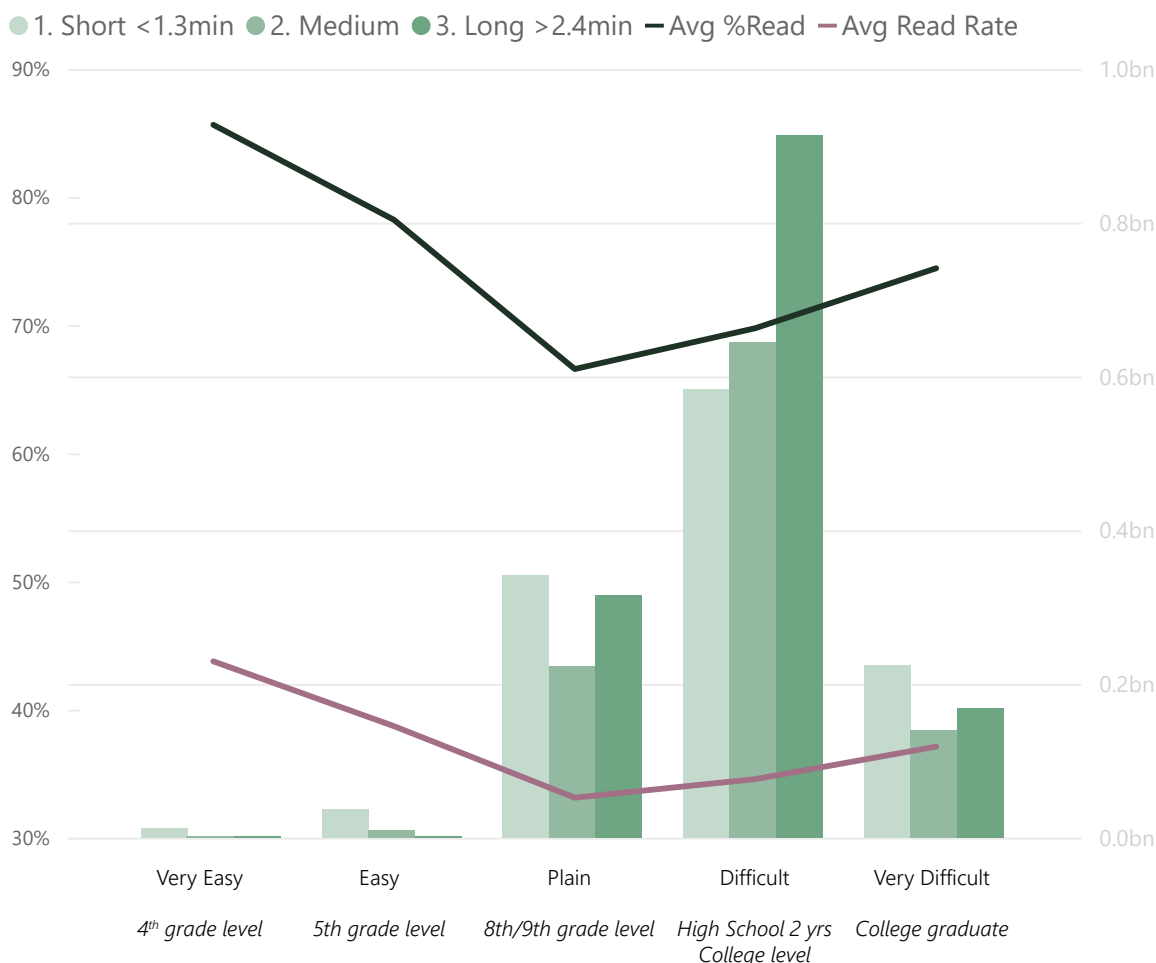
Using the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease Score to Assess Readability

As a best practice, keep your language to a 4th grade level.

This chart evaluates message lengths (short, medium, and long) using the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease score.

Very easy and easy texts, although less frequently sent, tend to be shorter (under 1.3 minutes) and achieve over 20% higher readership rates than short messages with very difficult text. Plain and difficult texts also tend to be longer (over 2.4 minutes) and yield below-average readership rates.

Messages by Length with Reading Ease





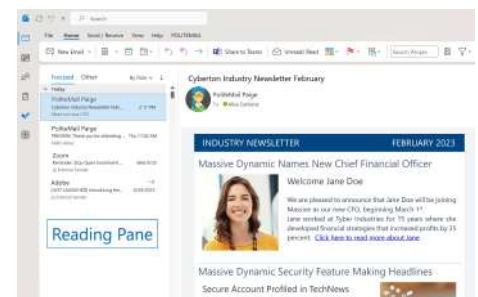
Use More Words, and Less Banners, in the Preview Window

Give recipients a quick preview to capture their interest and encourage them to open and engage with the message.

How Does Preview Content Impact Attention?

The use of large company logos and banners at the top of an internal email is usually a waste of precious space. Most companies brand their email as if it were marketing material, but employees already know it's internal communication by the From address. You can achieve standardized formats with well-recognized company branding by using fonts, colors, layout and image styles, as well as footers, so that your key messages and action items are placed at the top of the email.

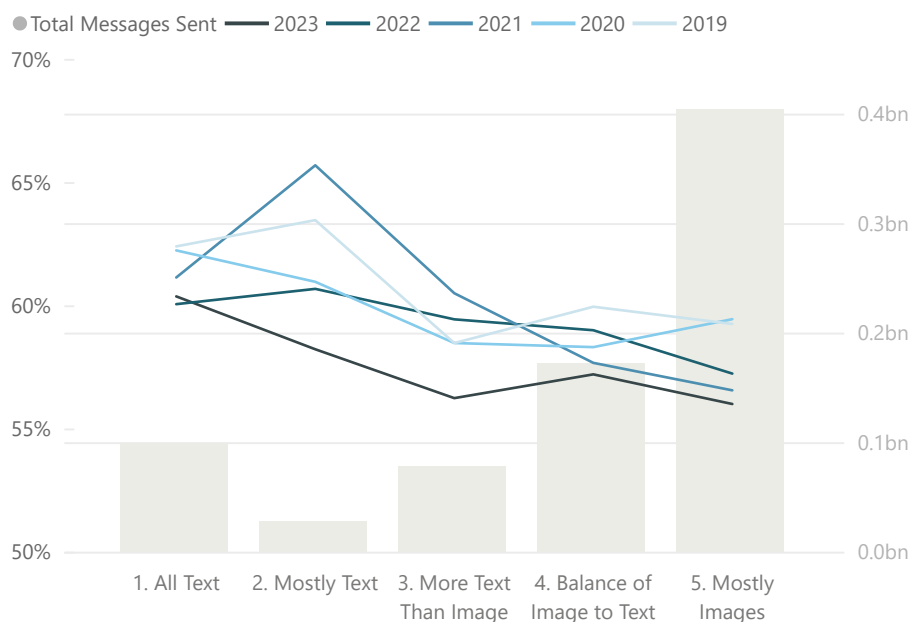
Let's take a closer look at how the content preview impacts your readers' attention spans. Our analysis of shorter messages that fit into the preview pane suggests that headlines matter significantly more than banner graphics when it comes to



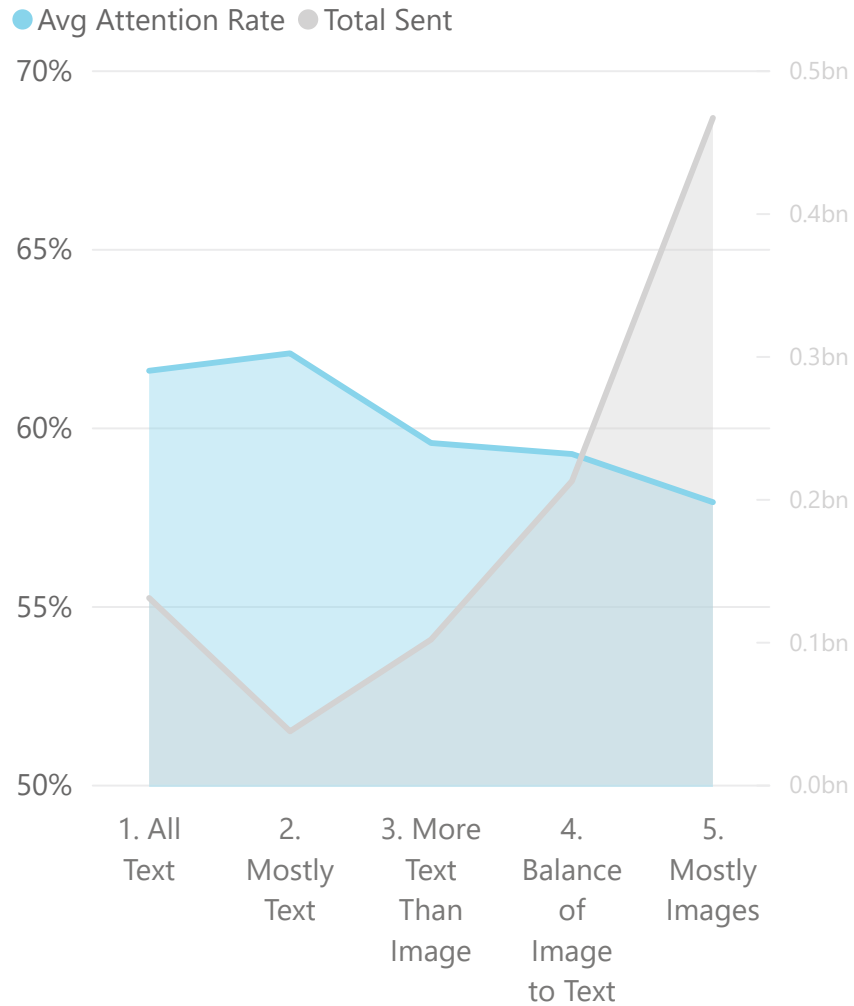
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capturing employee attention. Surprisingly, mostly text outperforms mostly image preview content by **16%** when measured by attention rate. Volume and novelty also play a factor, as image-heavy messages are sent **12 times more** often than text-heavy messages.

Y/Y Attention Rate by Content Ratio



Attention by Content Ratio



How PoliteMail Can Help

Use PoliteMail's PreFlight Test Send feature to send yourself and chosen individuals a copy of your email message so you can see how it looks to recipients before sending out. You can also use the Edit Preheader Text feature to edit the text that appears in the reading pane in Outlook, giving your recipients a chance to see what the email is about before opening it.



Get More Clicks By Sending Fewer Links

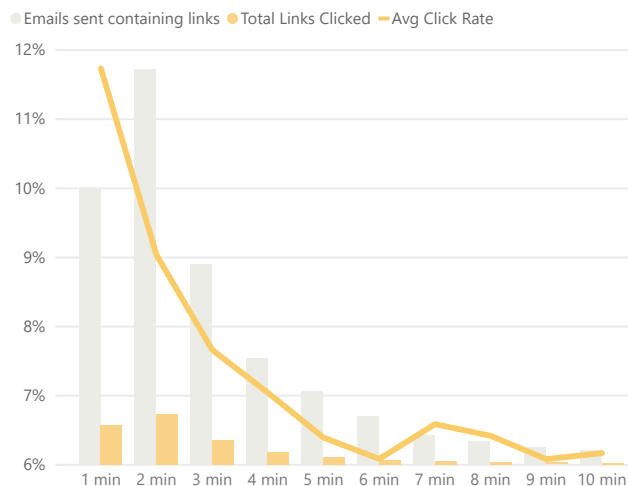
Use links judiciously. While newsletters and round-ups can benefit from many links, keep them in moderation for regular emails.

How Does Content Length Impact Click Engagement?

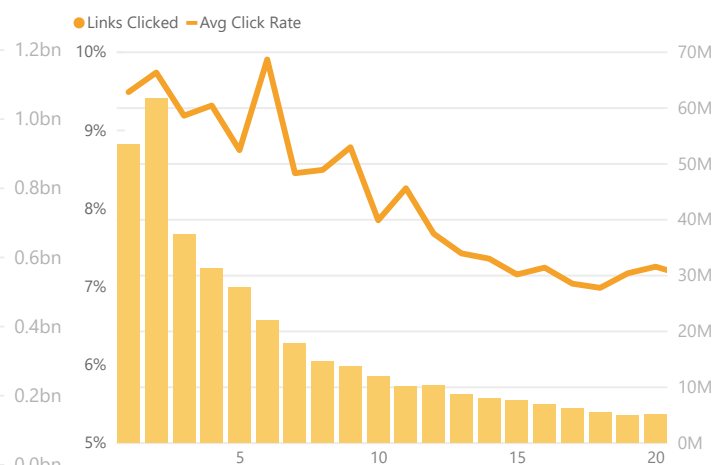
To increase click rates, it's best to keep your message content brief (one-minute read time or less) with one link near the top and another near the bottom. Messages that are two minutes long have a **25% lower click rate** (still above average), but longer content steadily decreases the click rate to just below **6%**.

The more URLs you include in your content, the lower your click rate and total clicks will be. On average, the optimal number of links in a message is two for the highest click rate and click volume. For newsletters or content requiring more links, the ideal number for the highest click rate is **six**.

Click Rate by Minutes Sent



Links Clicked by Links Sent with Click Rate

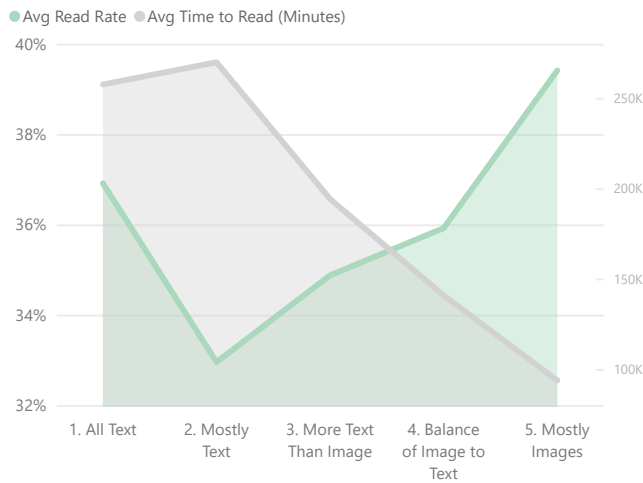


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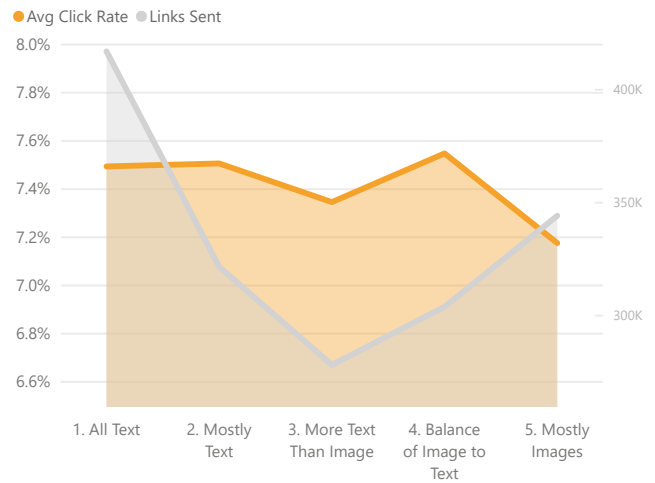
How Does Content Impact Readership and Clicks?

When it comes to readership, more image content yields higher rates. Employees read **21% more** of predominantly image-based content, most likely because such messages are, on average, two-thirds shorter in reading time. However, for clicks, employees are **13% more likely** to click on links within predominantly textual emails than primarily image-based messages.

Readership by Content Ratio



Click Rate by Content Ratio



[Click to enlarge](#)



Use PoliteMail's Save Links feature to save commonly used links. You can also use Smart Attachments to measure attachments such as PDFs, documents, and Powerpoint presentations. These attachments will be added to your messages as links, so you can keep your email size small, and get metrics on who clicked and opened your attachment.



Strategies for Success: What Are Top Communicators Doing Differently?



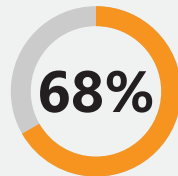
How Does Content Length Impact Click Engagement?

On average, communications teams produce

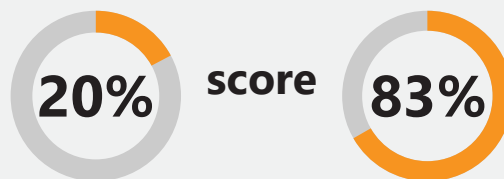


That translates into 31 minutes of reading time per employee per month.

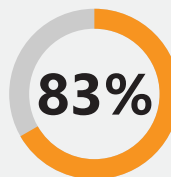
The average corporate email open rate is



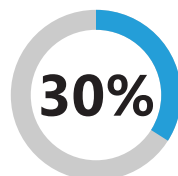
while those in the top



score



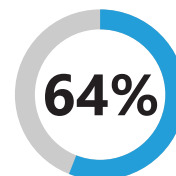
The average read rate for communicators is



while those in the top



are averaging a read rate of



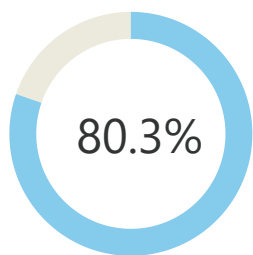
How do communicators performing in the top 20% cut through the noise and increase engagement?

The following charts grade the email data on a relative curve. To grade key metrics on a relative curve, all email results are ordered from best to worst and split into five even groups, each containing 20% of the total data samples (quintiles). The minimum score of the top performing section is Graded as an A, the minimum of the next is a B, and so on, with the worst performing graded as an F.

What Do High-Attention Senders Do Differently?

Messages that score in the top 20% of attention rate emails have a content balance leaning more toward words than images, have shorter subject lines, and are consistently sent earlier in the week. It's advised to use more images in an email, so long as, at the top, you have a good text headline or call to action. The best images enhance the story, evoke a mood, or make an emotional connection. Candid images of your employees in action will add life and depth to your communications.

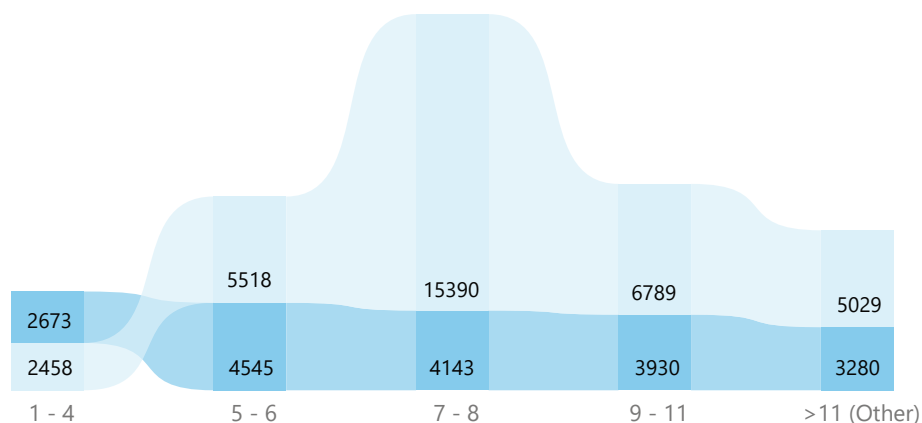
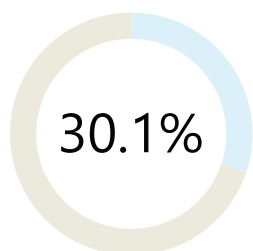
Top Quintile Attention Rate



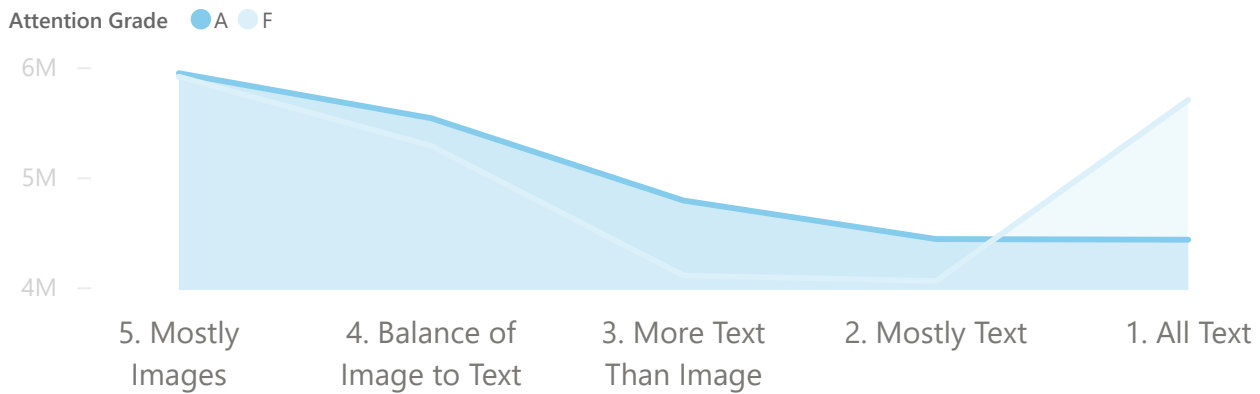
Volume by Words in Subject

Attention Grade ● A ● F

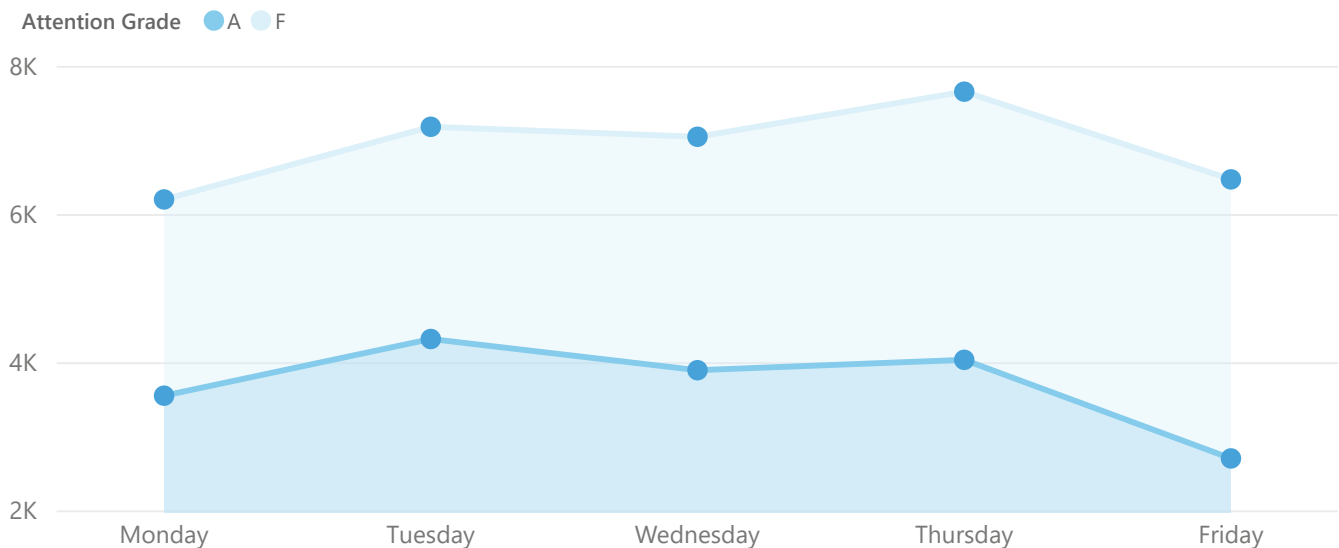
Bottom Quintile Attention



Volume by Content Ratio



Volume by Day of Week Sent



Attention-Grabbing Strategies

Want to grab attention? Here's what you should do:

Send From the Right Email Address: You can grab attention by sending emails from a recognized leader's name.

Use Short and Snappy Subject Lines: Create subject line that are concise, sharp, and intriguing. They pique curiosity and entice recipients to open and engage with your emails.

Make Monday THE Day: While most emails flood in on Thursdays, starting your week with an email on Monday consistently garners the highest attention, readership, and click rates.



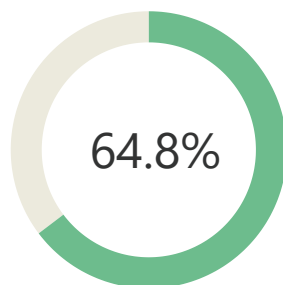
What Do High-Readership Senders Do Differently?

Communicators in the top 20% of readership:

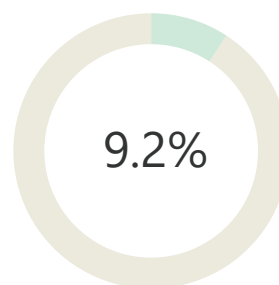
- ▶ Send more distributions to smaller, more targeted audiences.
- ▶ Keep the majority of their broadcast content under 3 minutes to read.
- ▶ Send 40% of messages as mostly image content.
- ▶ And send 30% as all text or mostly text.

Low-readership senders distribute to larger lists and send many emails of ten minutes or longer, with only 20% as mostly images and 44% as all text or mostly text to cater to diverse preferences.

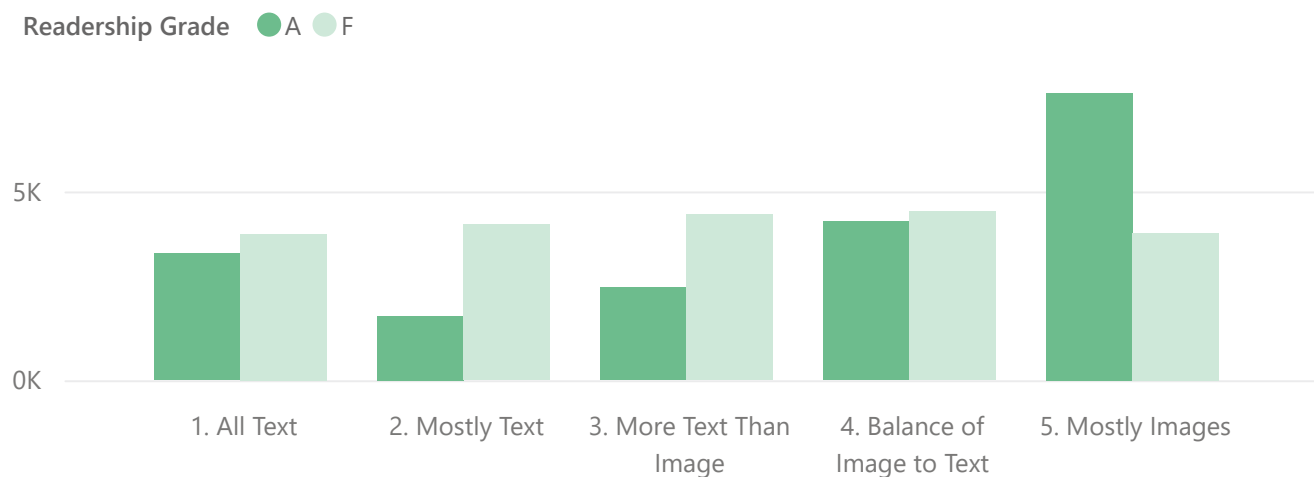
Top Quintile Read Rate



Bottom Quintile Read Rate

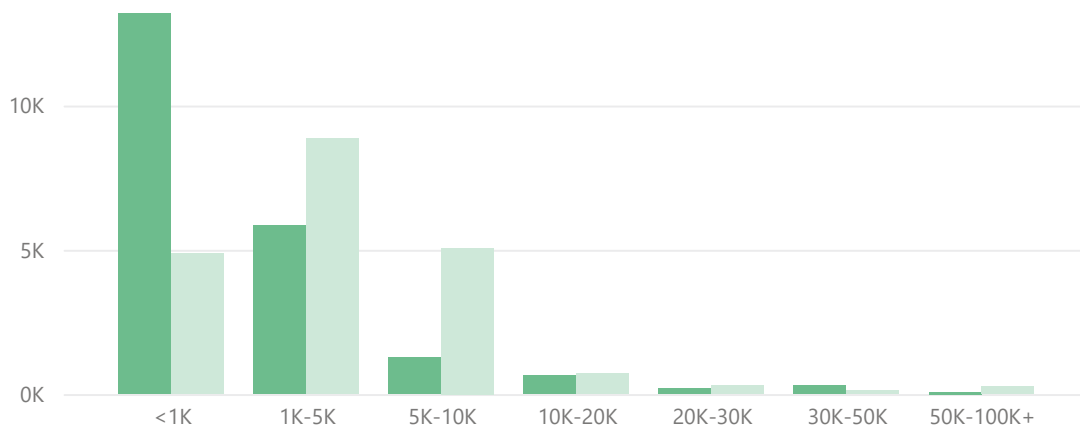


Messages by Content Type with Percent Read



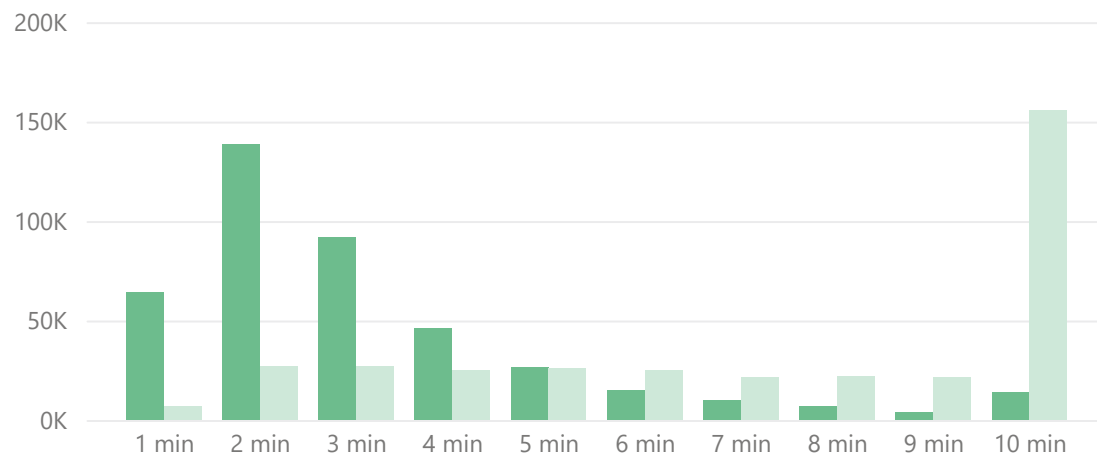
Messages by Recipient Count with Read Rate

Readership Grade ● A ● F



Content Minutes Sent

Readership Grade ● A ● F



Readership-Boosting Strategies

Want to boost readership? Here's what you should do:

Tailor Messages to Your Audience: Customize your emails for smaller, more targeted audiences, ensuring your messages reach the right people.

Keep It Brief: Respect recipients' time by keeping most content under three minutes to read.

Balance Content: Achieve better equilibrium by sending 40% of messages as mostly image content and 30% as all text or mostly text to cater to diverse preferences.



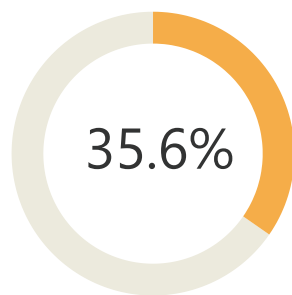
What Do Senders Who Achieve High Click Rates Do Differently?

Communicators in the top 20% of click effectiveness:

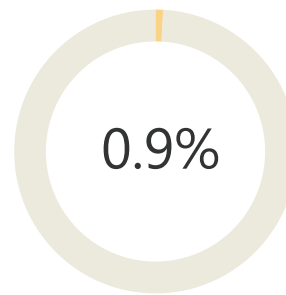
- ▶ Send far fewer links than the bottom 20%, who send 225% more.
- ▶ Send 35% of their linked content for the week on Mondays versus just 12% for the least effective.
- ▶ Keep most of their email messages under 3 minutes, whereas the least effective ones send more with significantly longer content.

Interestingly, in half of the total minutes of message content sent by those most effective at clicks, the messages contain over 15 links.

Top Quintile of Effective Rate

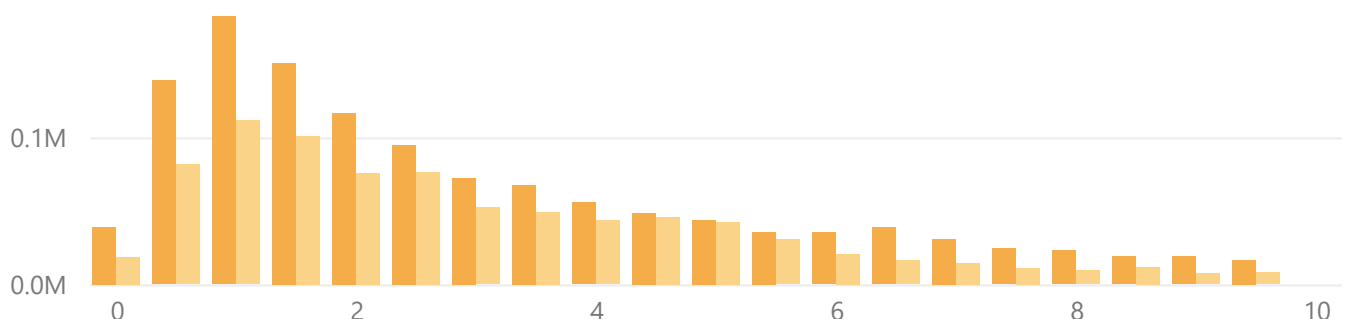


Bottom Quintile of Effective Rate

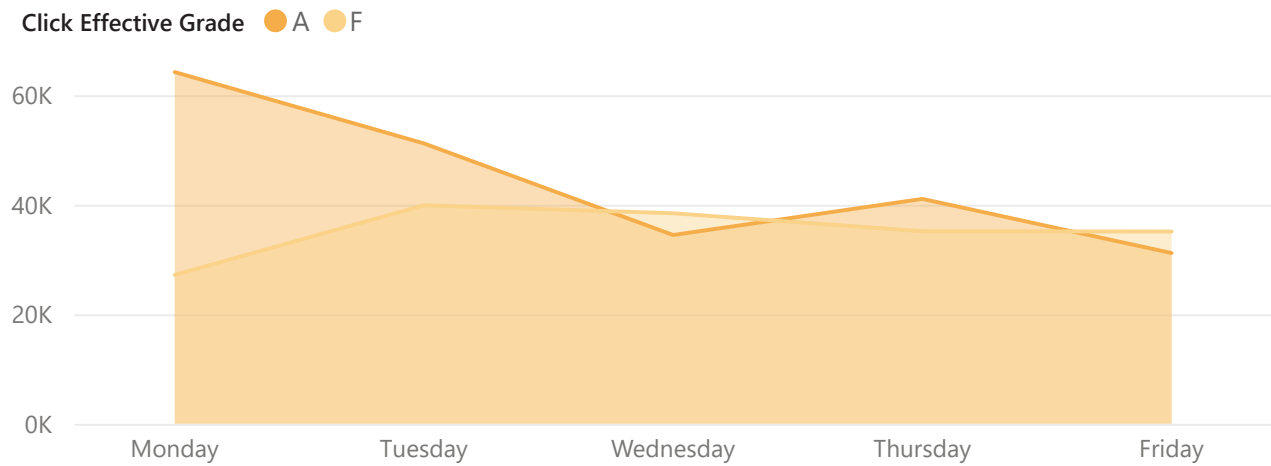


Link Sent by Message Length

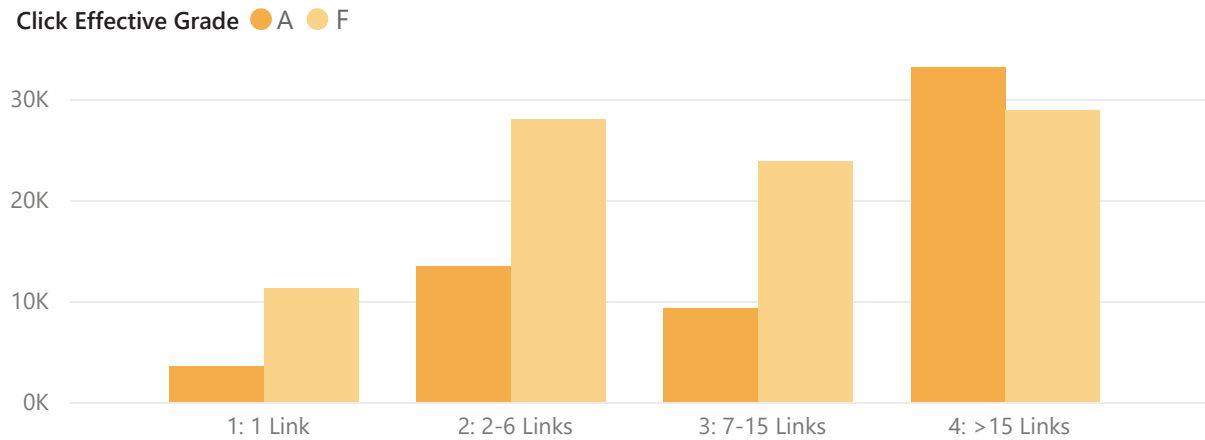
Click Effective Grade ● A ● F



Link Volume by Days of Week Sent



Minutes of Content by Link Sent Groups



Click-Through Enhancing Strategies

For those looking to boost clicks, these tips work wonders:

Limit Links: To encourage more clicks, limit link usage. Focus on quality over quantity - always.

Harness the Power of Mondays: Strategically release a substantial portion of your linked content on Mondays, capitalizing on the day when emails tend to perform the best.

Keep It Concise: Short and sweet emails entice readers to click and explore further.



In this guide, we've taken a deep dive into the world of effective email communication, exploring the strategies that capture attention, engage readers, and achieve measurable results. Now it's time to implement these strategies within your own organization.

These straightforward practices will help you turbocharge your email communication strategy, amplify engagement, and drive up click-through rates. But why stop there?

PoliteMail - Your Secret Weapon

PoliteMail is the perfect tool to refine your email practices further. Need an effortless solution to tackle the communication challenges of remote and hybrid work? With real-time metrics like open rates, read times, and click-through rates, PoliteMail enables you to gauge team engagement and evaluate the effectiveness of your communication strategy - right within Outlook.

What's more, PoliteMail's template builder empowers you to craft visually appealing, mobile-responsive templates that work on any device, leading to increased engagement and streamlined communication.

Data shows that communicators who use PoliteMail for more than 2 years improve performance for all key email metrics, including attention, readership, and engagement. Ready to take your email game to the next level? Request a demo and elevate your communication strategy with PoliteMail today!

[Request a Demo](#)



Download more benchmark data and best practices from PoliteMail.

Includes data for Email Reach, Readership, Engagement, Clicks, and Frequency for 10 S&P industry sectors and 7 distribution list sizes.

See where you stand in the curve
against your industry peers.



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