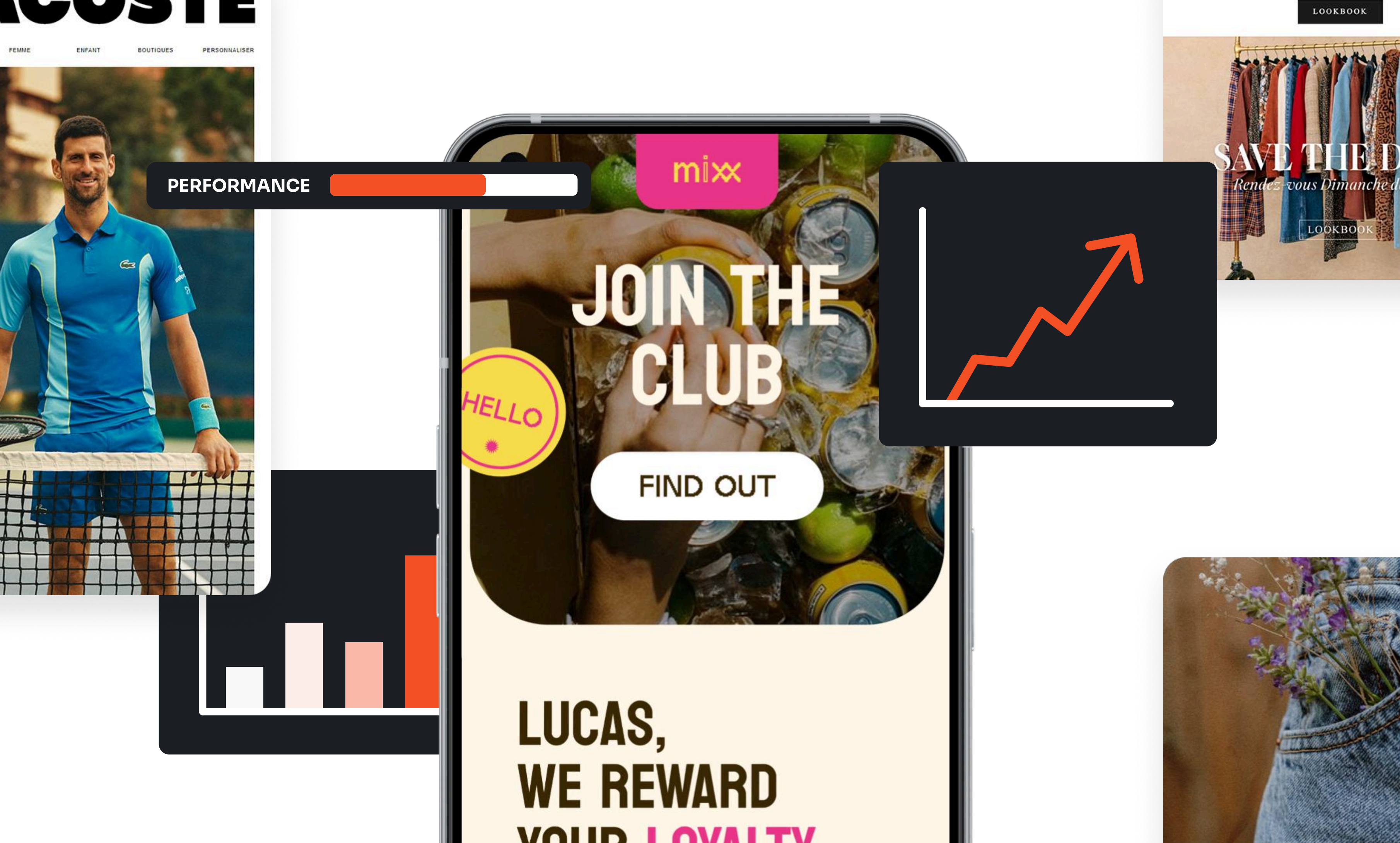




10

STRATEGIC STANDARDS

for winning email performance

High-performing emails
with Email Builders



 **JustRelate**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Email marketing is at a strategic turning point.

Although it delivers an exceptional ROI of \$36-\$45 for every \$1 spent (Litmus, 2024), most organizations still treat email production as a secondary concern. They outsource it to agencies and rely on developers or rigid workflows. The discrepancy between the strategic value of email and its operational implementation creates hidden competitive vulnerabilities.

This whitepaper presents 10 strategic email standards that transform marketing operations from tactical execution to competitive capability. It demonstrates how professional email builders enable teams to implement these standards faster, more accurately, and with complete operational independence from external agencies or developers.

The modern marketing environment demands immediate response capability. Market opportunities appear and disappear within hours, not weeks. Yet, many marketing teams remain constrained by workflows that involve multiple handovers between strategy, design, development, and external agencies. This operational friction slows reaction time and creates unnecessary costs, particularly problematic when time-to-market determines competitive advantage.

Modern email builders transform operational constraints into competitive advantages. They empower in-house teams to craft sophisticated, brand-consistent emails without requiring coding expertise, slashing production time by 30-50% and eliminating dependency cycles that hinder market responsiveness. AI integration accelerates content creation while maintaining brand consistency across languages and segments.

The competitive advantage lies with teams that master modern email operations. The strategic framework is proven, the tools are available, and performance gains are immediate and measurable.

TL;DR: Better emails produced faster with fewer obstacles. This whitepaper shows how.

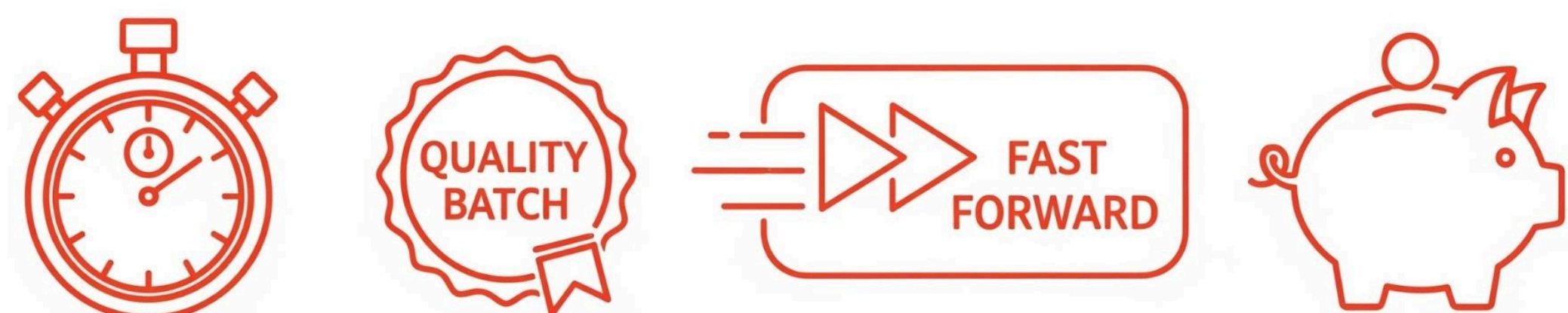


TABLE OF CONTENT

- 1

Email as strategic infrastructure, not just a marketing channel
- 2

Technical foundation: Tools, AI, and composability
- 3

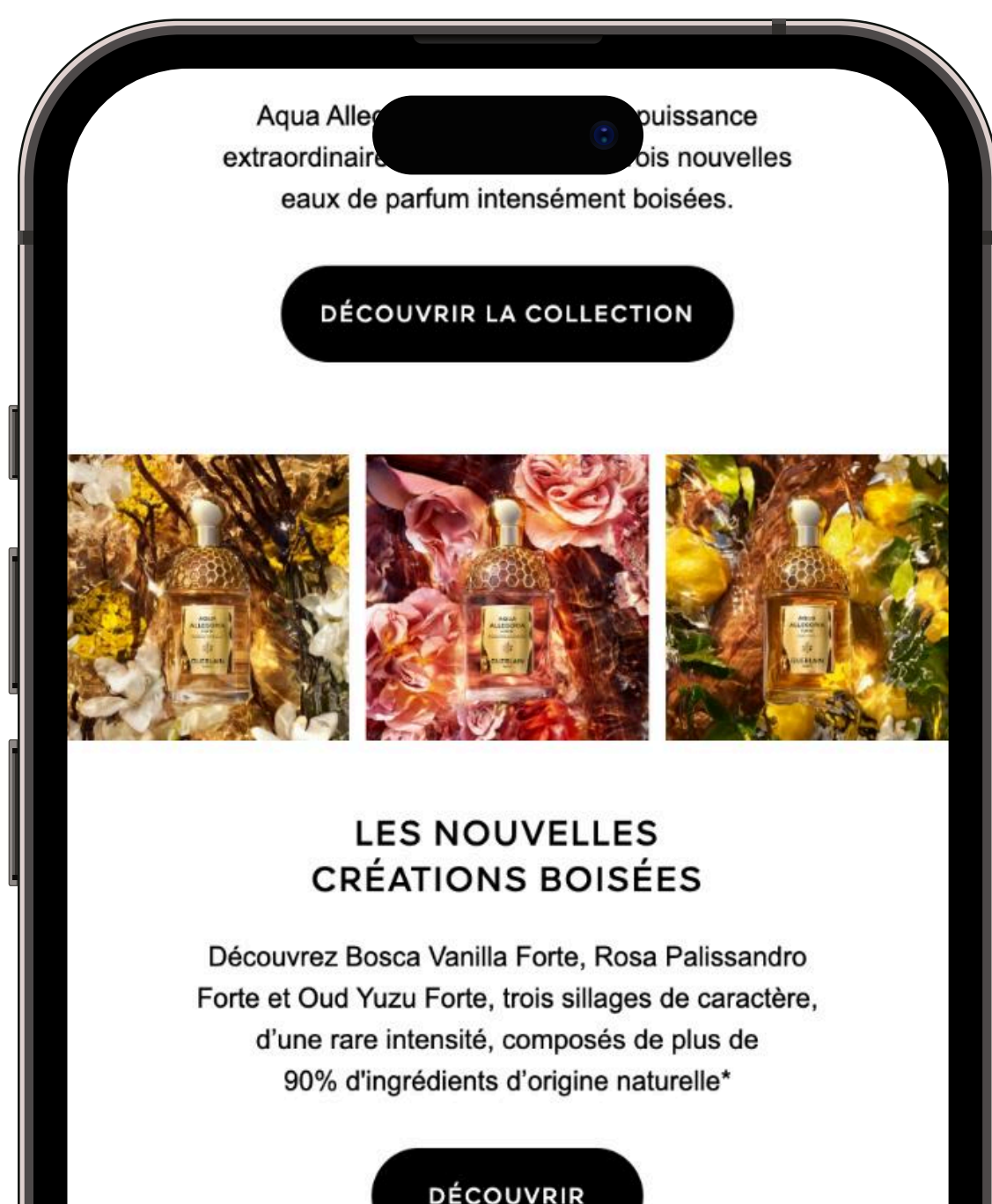
10 strategic email standards for competitive performance
- 4

The business impact: What you gain by building emails right
- 5

Conclusion: The transformative imperative of email building
- A

Glossary
- B

About the author



1

**Email as strategic
infrastructure,
not just marketing
channel**

Email remains the most trusted, controllable, and scalable digital communication channel available to marketers. With **361 billion emails received daily** (Statista, 2024), it remains the central hub for customer communication, encompassing onboarding, re-engagement, and retention.

The channel has evolved beyond simple messaging. Modern email incorporates **interactive elements, responsive design, personalised content**, and **strict compliance standards**. Today’s campaigns feature hover effects, dark mode compatibility, dynamic content, and modular layouts: functionality that rivals web experiences.

Yet many organisations still rely on slow, fragmented production processes that depend on external agencies. This discrepancy between the channel’s capabilities and the speed of execution prevents brands from responding effectively to market changes and business opportunities.

The solution lies in combining the quality and reliability of modern email with faster production cycles. **Email builders bridge this gap** by enabling in-house teams to deliver polished, responsive campaigns in hours, rather than days, creating the agility and operational efficiency demanded by competitive markets.

Email by the numbers: Five facts on the channel’s dominance

ROI leadership	Email delivers an average ROI of \$36:1, with some sectors achieving up to \$45:1 (Litmus, 2024)
Customer preference	69% of consumers worldwide prefer email as their primary communication channel with brands (eMarketer, 2024)
Retention power	Roughly 80% of companies report using email to retain or re-engage customers in both B2B and B2C (AudiencePoint, 2023)
Transaction performance	Personalized emails deliver six times higher transaction rates compared to generic, one-size-fits-all messages (Experian)
Mobile dominance	50-60% of email opens come from mobile devices, underscoring the importance of responsive, mobile-first design (AudiencePoint, 2024)

The execution crisis in modern email marketing

The challenges surrounding email marketing today are not about relevance. They are about **execution**. The environment has become more complex: spam filters are stricter, design expectations are higher, privacy regulations limit tracking, and audiences demand personalised, well-crafted content. Simply sending a message is no longer enough; how the message is created, delivered, and displayed now determines its success.

This execution crisis **creates both strategic risk and competitive opportunity**. Organizations that master modern email operations gain significant advantages, while those relying on outdated processes face declining performance and missed opportunities.

Key challenges in today's email marketing

○ Standing out in a crowded inbox

Users receive dozens of emails every day, so poor design or inconsistent branding can result in low engagement or, even worse, instant deletion. The visual and functional quality of your emails directly impacts brand perception and customer engagement.

○ Optimized resource allocation

Nowadays, internet service providers (ISPs) evaluate emails based on the reputation of the sender, the structure of the code, domain authentication (SPF, DKIM, and DMARC,) and user behaviour. Even minor HTML errors or excessive file size can trigger spam filters, so technical precision is now a business requirement.

○ Tracking and personalization are under pressure

Privacy measures such as Apple Mail Privacy Protection (MPP) and Gmail's image proxying, as well as upcoming European ePrivacy regulations, are rendering traditional metrics such as open rates less reliable. Marketers must therefore shift their focus to engagement, clicks, and quality interactions – metrics that require sophisticated measurement and optimisation.

○ Agency and developer dependency create bottlenecks

Campaign production via external teams often takes several days, delaying launches and reducing responsiveness. This creates friction, making A/B testing, personalisation, and quick adjustments almost impossible to implement on a large scale. This limits strategic agility when markets shift rapidly.

The opportunity: Regain speed, quality, and control

Leading organisations recognise that production speed is a strategic capability, rather than just an operational metric. Teams that can move **from concept to deployment in hours rather than days** can seize opportunities that their competitors miss, test more variations, and respond to market signals with precision.

Modern email production platforms enable teams to **reduce campaign creation time by 30–50%** while maintaining or improving quality standards. This acceleration is achieved by eliminating handoffs, standardising components, and providing direct control to marketing teams. The result is that email is transformed **from a slow-moving channel into a rapid-response capability** that matches the pace of modern business.

Major provider changes in 2025

The email ecosystem continues to evolve with stricter requirements from major providers. Understanding and adapting to these changes determines deliverability success:

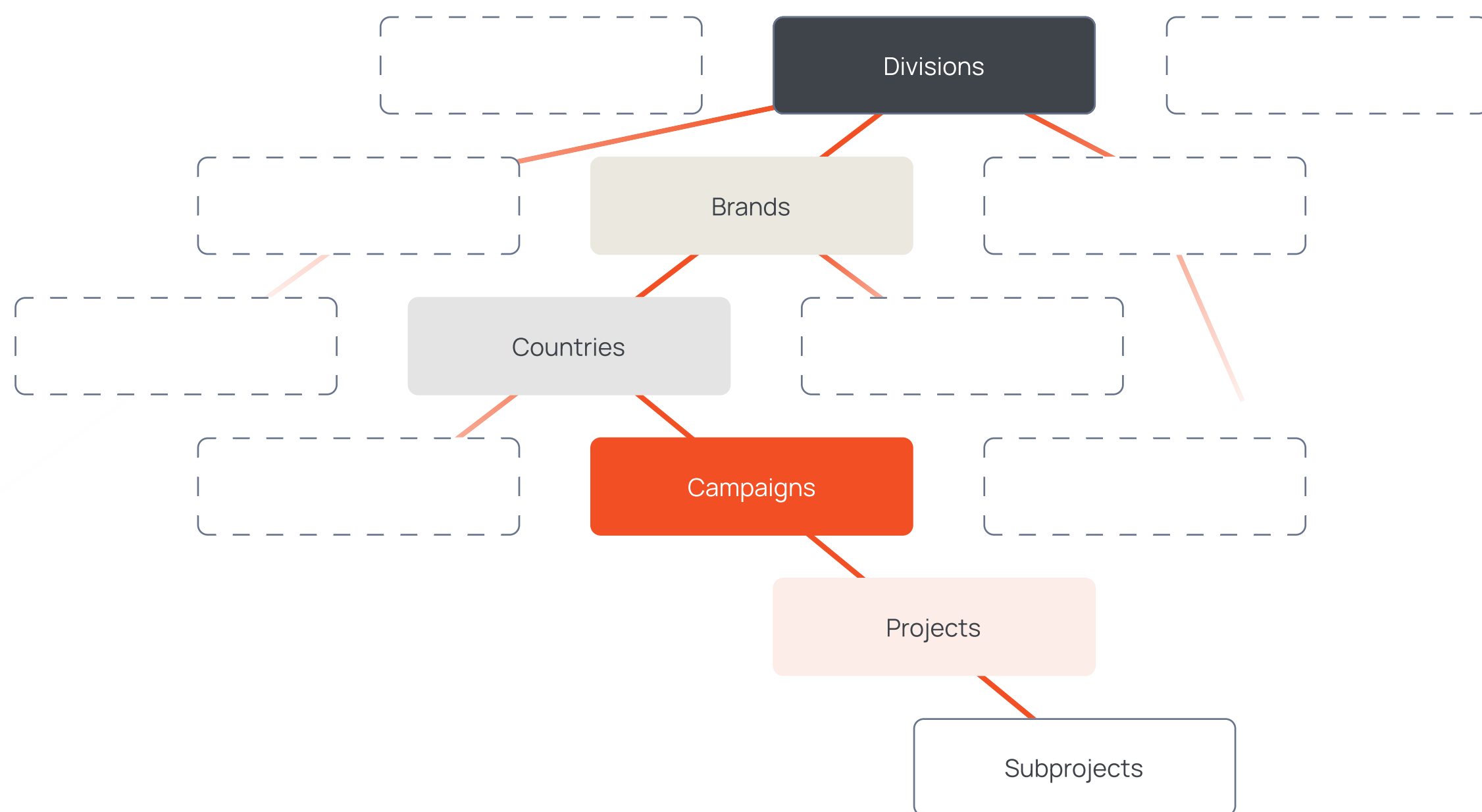
Mailbox provider	Market share	What changed in 2025	Business impact	Market share
Apple Mail / iCloud	49.4%	iOS 18 introduced AI-generated email previews and automatic categorization into Primary, Transactions, Updates, and Promotions tabs. Apple Intelligence now provides AI-generated summaries. Enhanced Mail Privacy Protection expanded UTM parameter stripping.	Critical risk: Nearly half your audience. AI categorization has a direct impact on email visibility and engagement rates. Traditional preview text becomes less relevant as AI-generated summaries become more prevalent.	Optimize subject lines for AI interpretation. Test email categorization across Apple's new tabs. Reduce dependency on UTM tracking parameters. Prepare category-specific email strategies.
Gmail / Google	25.9%	Stricter enforcement of bulk sender requirements: SPF, DKIM, and DMARC authentication is now mandatory for 5,000+ emails/day. One-click unsubscribe required. Enhanced spam filtering based on engagement patterns and sender reputation.	High risk: Affects roughly 30% of your audience. Poor authentication or declining engagement rates trigger automatic spam filtering, directly impacting campaign performance.	Audit authentication setup immediately. Implement engagement-based list cleaning. Test one-click unsubscribe functionality. Monitor sender reputation metrics closely.
Microsoft Outlook	4.4%	New authentication requirements for senders exceeding 5,000 emails/day are effective as of May 2025. Unlike other providers, Microsoft directly rejects non-compliant emails rather than routing them to spam - zero tolerance for authentication failures.	Medium risk: Lower volume but enterprise-critical. Authentication failures result in complete delivery blocks, not just spam placement. Particularly impacts B2B communications.	Ensure flawless SPF, DKIM, and DMARC configuration. Test authentication thoroughly before campaigns. Monitor complaint rates below 0.1% for Microsoft domains.
Yahoo	2.2%	Enhanced content scrutiny and stricter bulk sender rules. Increased focus on sender-content alignment and aggressive list hygiene requirements. SPF/DKIM/DMARC mandatory for bulk senders.	Lower risk: Smaller audience, but it affects the US market reach. Poor practices trigger domain-level filtering that's difficult to reverse once implemented.	Align "From" addresses with content themes. Remove inactive subscribers aggressively. Avoid affiliate-heavy or tracking-dense content.

2

Technical foundation: Tools, AI, and composability

Marketing effectiveness now depends on the ability to produce high-quality campaigns at the speed of business. To succeed at scale, email production must become composable, context-aware, and tightly aligned with organizational structure and strategy. This is where modern email builders, AI, and a project-centric operating model converge.

Rather than relying on static folder hierarchies or siloed tools, the Marketing Home structures are designed to work around **natural marketing logic: from Brand to Campaign to Project**. This mirrors how real marketing teams operate, bringing clarity and consistency to complex environments with multiple markets, languages, or product lines.



Knowledge in marketing is organized along the company's hierarchy

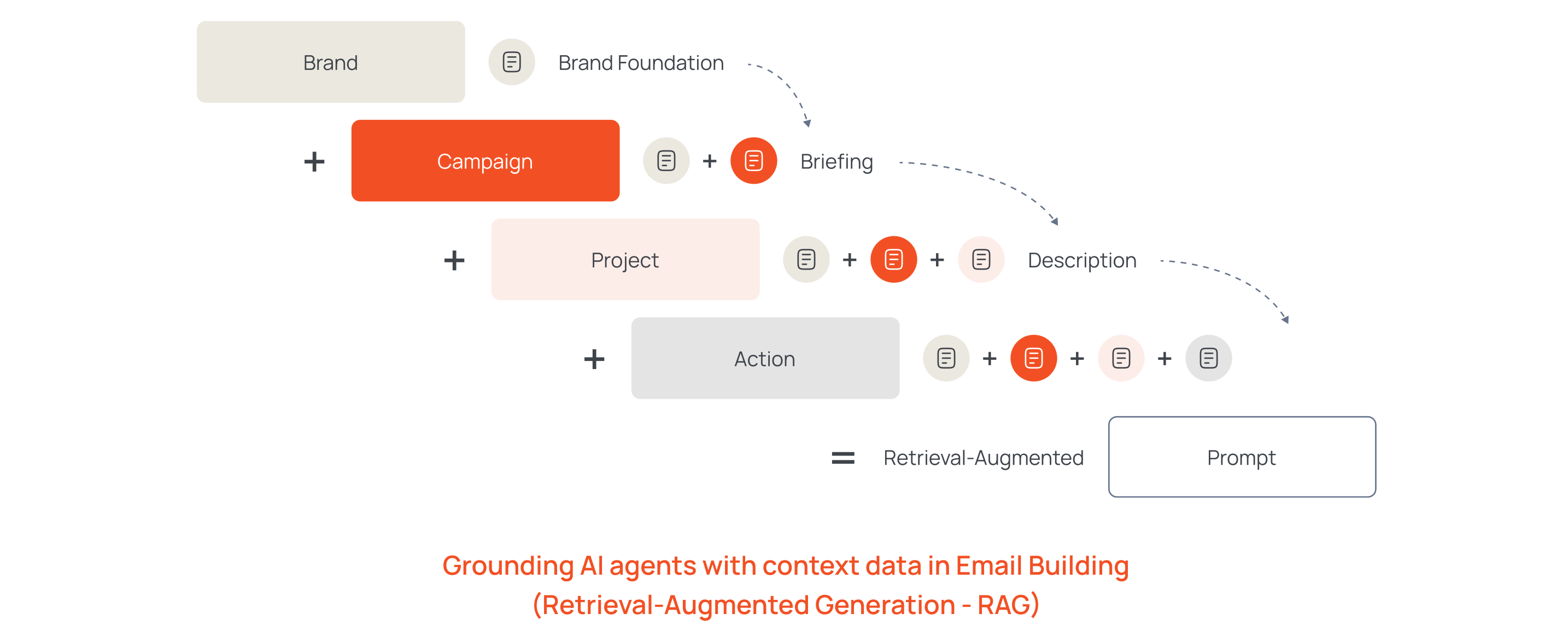
From tool-centric to strategy-centric email operations

Smart email building turns the abstract concept of composability into a practical, everyday marketing execution. Rather than starting from scratch or relying on inflexible templates, marketers use modular components such as headers, calls to action, product blocks, and disclaimers that can be reused, remixed, and localised without touching code.

This operational shift creates measurable business impact:

- **Email builders become creative engines**, enabling marketers to compose responsive, on-brand emails through intuitive interfaces
- **Teams stay focused**, switching between strategic planning and tactical execution without losing context
- **Platform switching disappears**, because all tools and workflows connect within the same workspace

The result is a marketing system that is modular yet coherent, fast yet scalable, and autonomous yet strategically aligned.



Context-aware AI: Beyond generic content generation

At the heart of this change lies the professional email builder. Unlike traditional workflows, which rely on developers or agencies, email builders allow marketing teams to design and produce pixel-perfect, responsive emails independently. This reduces errors and inconsistencies while **shortening production cycles by 30–50%**. Tools such as Dartagnan Email Builder automatically provide compatibility with mobile devices, Retina displays, dark mode, and accessibility standards.

Artificial intelligence enhances this process through **smart subject line generation**, **layout suggestion**, and **predictive performance analysis**. With AI integrated into the toolset, marketers can test and personalise more and launch faster without increasing their workload.

AI capabilities that transform email operations

○ Tone-of-voice control	Adjusts content style to match the brand's personality (formal, friendly, or bold), ensuring a consistent tone across languages, segments, and campaigns.
○ Subject line generation	It creates multiple subject line variants tailored to the audience and campaign goals, and optimized for engagement.
○ Content rewriting & rephrasing	Rewrites text blocks for different tones, lengths, or customer segments while maintaining brand alignment and message intent.
○ Multilingual translation with brand context	Provides fluent, culturally appropriate translations that maintain brand tone and emotional resonance without requiring external agencies.
○ Quality control & compliance checks	Detects grammar issues, off-brand terminology, missing CTAs, readability problems, and potential spam triggers automatically.
○ Content generation	Generates first drafts of entire email bodies, headers, footers, or modules based on structured brand and campaign context.
○ Sentiment & emotion tuning	Analyzes and adjusts emotional tone (urgency, excitement, reassurance) to align with message intent and audience.
○ Prompt-aware copy editing (via RAG)	Leverages Retrieval-Augmented Generation to generate grounded, context-aware copy based on brand assets and campaign metadata.
○ Segment-specific content variants	Creates tailored versions of emails for different demographics, buyer personas, or funnel stages, enabling sophisticated A/B testing.
○ Reactivation/Retention	Keeping current users active and loyal through relevant, valuable communication and bringing inactive sleepers back into engagement with reactivation flows, updated messaging, or new value propositions.

Grounding AI with strategic context

Artificial intelligence only becomes valuable for email composition when it understands the context in which it operates. Structured, project-based composition, through technologies like Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG), unlocks exponential value in this area.

Rather than producing generic content from shallow prompts, RAG-enabled email building draws directly from brand guidelines, campaign objectives, target audiences, existing assets, and past performance data.

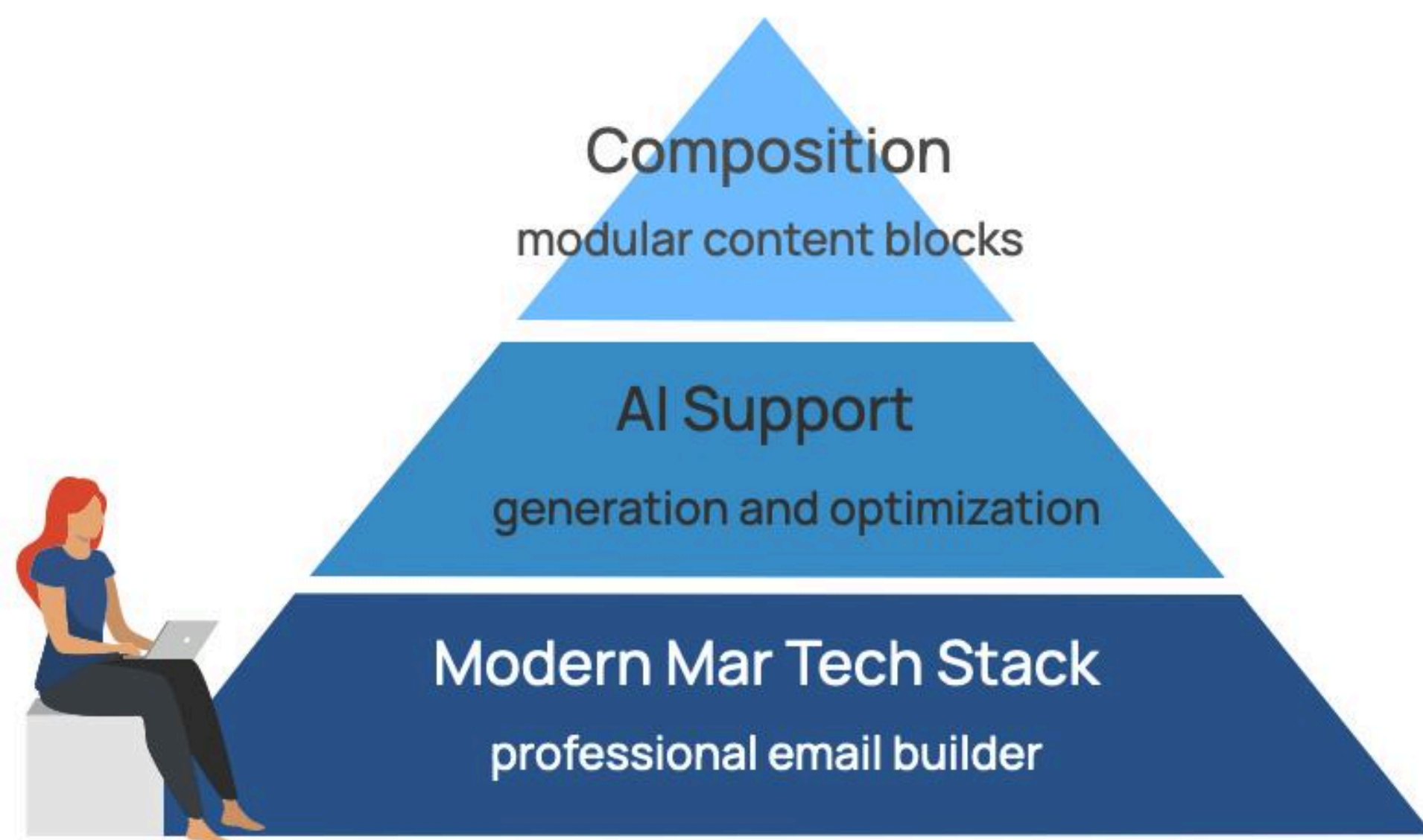
This contextual grounding enables AI to generate content that is faster to produce because less rework is needed, more accurate with tone and structure aligned to brand standards, brand-safe by reducing hallucinations or off-brand messaging, and relevantly personalized based on live data inputs or campaign metadata.

In practice, AI-generated subject lines, product descriptions, and alternative versions of emails are no longer rough drafts; they are ready-to-launch assets that meet quality and compliance standards from the outset.

Composable architecture: Speed without sacrificing quality

The principle of composability proves equally essential. Instead of rigid templates, emails are assembled from flexible content blocks that can be reused across campaigns. This enables teams to scale quickly, maintain consistent branding, and adapt layouts without having to start from scratch every time.

Composable email systems enable marketing teams to respond to market opportunities within hours rather than days. When a product launches, a competitor makes a move, or market conditions shift, teams can rapidly assemble new campaigns using proven components while maintaining brand consistency and technical quality.



A strategic foundation for effective emails

These three pillars — modern tools, AI, and composable emails — form a strategic foundation that enables teams to respond faster to market changes, experiment with confidence, and deliver better results with fewer resources. Those who master this integration gain a sustainable competitive advantage in terms of market responsiveness, operational efficiency, and the quality of customer engagement.

3

10 strategic email standards for competitive performance

Now, we translate strategic principles into **concrete execution**. This selection of standards reflects advanced thinking in design, accessibility, deliverability, and user experience – each critical to email performance. Combined **with the power of a modern email builder**, these standards ensure your messages look better, load faster, perform stronger, and scale smarter.

Use margins and white space strategically

White space is powerful, even though it may appear empty. It frames your content, improves focus, and can **increase readability by up to 20%** (Nielsen Norman Group). Consistent margins give your email a rhythm and hierarchy, helping the reader’s eye flow smoothly from the headline to the call to action (CTA) without difficulty.

It’s the application of **behavioural psychology to email design**. Strategically placed white space reduces cognitive load and draws attention to your most essential elements. In crowded inboxes where users scan rather than read, **white space becomes a competitive advantage**.

With a professional email builder, margin consistency can be built into design blocks, reducing errors and automatically maintaining brand guidelines across emails.

- Don’t be afraid of blank space**
There is no universal value for margins. The key is to leave space for emptiness. It allows for breathing room and enhances the impact of the content.
- Opt for consistency**
Apply the same margins for each type of element: one margin size for the space between a title and a paragraph, another for the space between a title and a subtitle.
- Don’t hesitate to step out of the box**
Want to separate an element? You can differentiate its margins: smaller, larger; it’s up to you.
- Form groups**
Ensure that visually, elements are brought together in a way that allows readers to associate them with one another, thereby respecting the Law of Proximity.

Une célébration des merveilles du monde
[Version en ligne](#)

GUERLAIN
PARIS



AQUA ALLEGORIA
COLLECTION

Complétée par les nouvelles créations Florabloom, la collection de parfums Aqua Allegoria explore l'inspiration inépuisable d'une Nature aux multiples facettes dans un arc-en-ciel de nuances olfactives.

EXPLORER LA COLLECTION



FLORABLOOM
EAU DE TOILETTE

L'explosion joyeuse et haute en couleurs d'un merveilleux bouquet floral.

COMMANDER



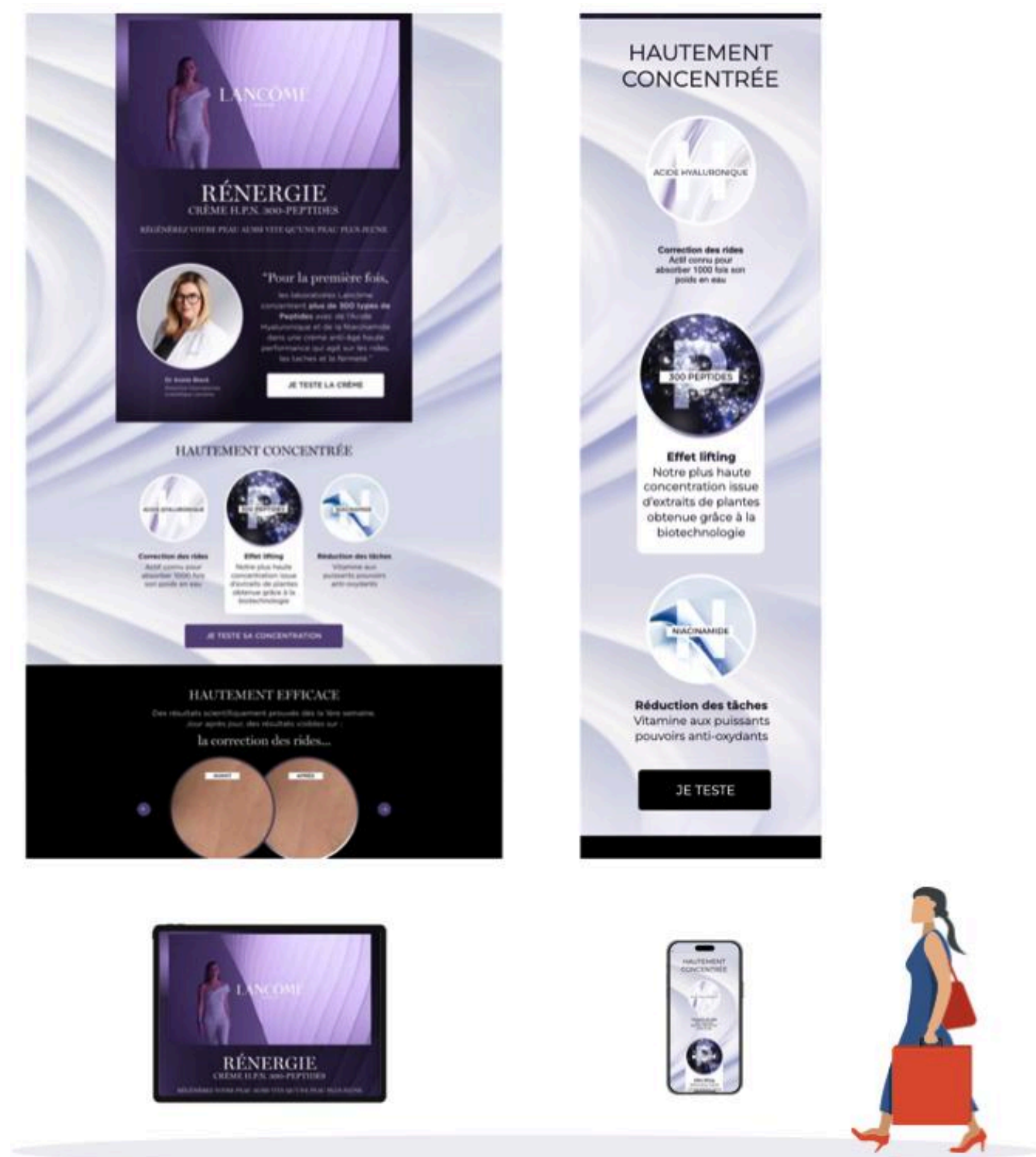
FLORABLOOM FORTE
EAU DE PARFUM

Un parterre infini de fleurs aux mille couleurs dans la lumière du soleil couchant.

COMMANDER

Design for responsiveness

Consistent survey results show that email is the preferred communication channel for consumers. A MarketingSherpa poll found that around **72% of adults prefer email for company communications**. Mobile-first email design is now a business requirement, rather than a technical luxury. Poorly adapted layouts can result in broken visuals, illegible text, and buttons that are too small to be easily used.



- **Don't forget the landscape format**
Design for all versions: desktop, tablet, and mobile orientations
- **Use the background**
Forget the full-size image and instead favor the use of the background for more flexibility on mobile
- **You can hide content on mobile**
On mobile, feel free to lighten your content by hiding elements present in your desktop version
- **Be careful with element sizes**
Remember the size guidelines for CTAs and text; mobile layouts need to be optimized for touch interaction

Modern email builders handle this automatically. They let you preview desktop and mobile side by side, hide or modify content based on screen size, and ensure optimal interaction without needing separate mobile versions. This technical automation allows marketing teams to focus on message strategy rather than technical implementation details.

Business impact: Responsive design has a direct effect on revenue conversion. Mobile users who encounter poorly formatted emails abandon the interaction immediately, representing lost revenue opportunities that compound across every campaign.

Apply effective typography & paragraph structure

Typography can make or break the readability of your message. It's not just a design detail; it's a fundamental factor in how your message is read, understood, and acted upon. Poor text structure can render even the best offer invisible, whereas **explicit, well-styled text engages the reader and encourages them to respond to your call to action**.

This principle is fundamental in business email communication, where recipients decide whether to engage within seconds. Typography that facilitates quick scanning and comprehension can directly impact conversion rates and customer response.

Technical standards for optimal readability

To optimize for readability, use **a font size of at least 14–16px** for body copy and **a line height of 140–150%**. This improves eye tracking, particularly on mobile devices. Avoid long lines (ideally 50–75 characters per line) and break the text into short, scannable paragraphs of no more than three to four lines each.

System fonts	Google fonts	Custom fonts
THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG	THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG	THE QUICK BROWN FOX JUMPS OVER THE LAZY DOG
• Displays in all cases • Management of up to 2 weights • Visible in all messaging apps • Limited brand differentiation	• Already hosted (by Google) • Multiple weights possible • Visible in approximately 15% of environments • Strong brand expression	• Hosting required • Multiple weights possible • Visible in approximately 15% of environments • Maximum brand differentiation

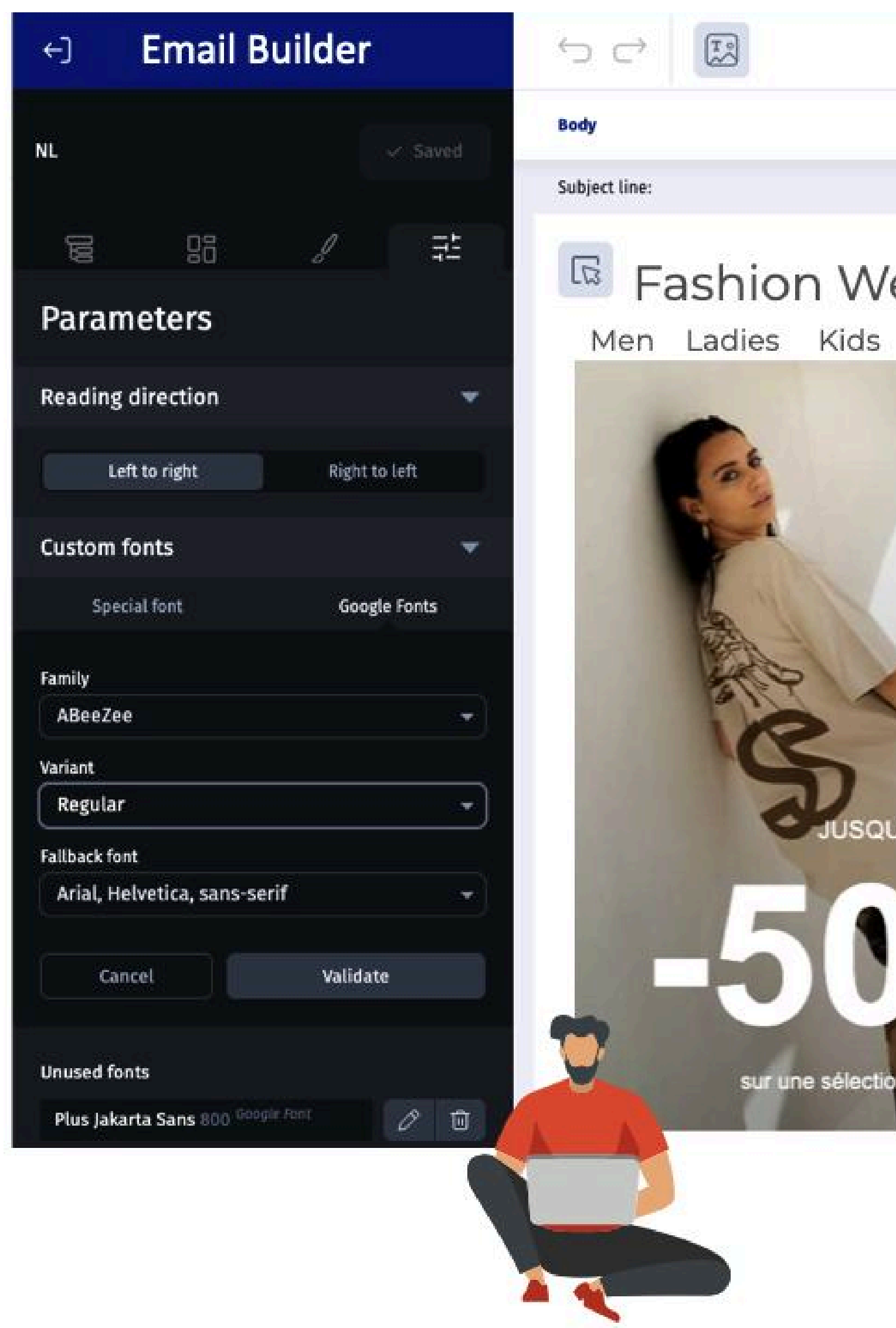
Hierarchy that drives action

Use hierarchy to guide attention strategically:

- **Headlines should stand out** with bold weights and larger sizes (22-28px)
- **Subheadings should visually separate** sections and support scanning behavior
- **Avoid using all caps in body text** – it reduces legibility and can appear aggressive

Limit your design to **two font families at most** – one for headlines, one for body copy – ideally web-safe or supported fallback fonts to ensure consistent rendering across email clients. For brand identity, consider using Google Fonts or custom fonts, but always define a reliable fallback to ensure compatibility.

Technical implementation guidelines



- **The magic number**
Generally, two distinct fonts are enough to create rhythm in your email. You can push it to 3 if necessary.
- **Minimum 14px**
For paragraphs, we recommend a minimum text size of 14px, which ensures readability across various devices and age demographics.
- **Beware of compatibility**
Special fonts can enhance your brand identity. However, please note that they may not display in all configurations.
- **Every issue has its solution**
If the initially defined font does not display, a system font will be used as a replacement: this can be configured when creating the email. Select a fallback font that closely resembles your original font to maintain harmony throughout your campaign.
- **And hosting?**
To avoid hosting special typography (non-native), you can use Google Fonts. Be cautious, as the hosting provided by Google for Google Fonts does not guarantee compliance with the GDPR.

From a technical standpoint, email builders help to enforce consistency. They allow you to **define global styles for font sizes, colours, and spacing, and apply pre-set paragraph formats** across campaigns. They also help you to avoid inline overrides that create code bloat or client-specific rendering issues.

Long blocks of text tend to reduce engagement, whereas well-structured layouts with headings, bullet points, and short paragraphs enhance clarity and readability. **Email builders enable non-coders to set these parameters globally**, achieving consistent results and ensuring that typography becomes a strategic asset rather than a technical constraint.

Business impact: Professional typography has a direct influence on brand perception and message comprehension. Organizations with consistent, readable email typography see higher engagement rates and stronger brand recognition across customer touchpoints.

Optimize CTAs for visibility and interaction

The Call-To-Action (CTA) is where all your efforts come together. Buttons should be clearly worded, visually prominent, and strategically placed. CTAs represent the critical conversion moment in email marketing. Poor CTA design directly translates to lost revenue, while optimized CTAs can dramatically improve campaign ROI. This makes **CTA optimization a strategic business requirement, not just a design consideration**.

- Find the right balance

CTAs are the main click area of your emails: feel free to include them while remaining reasonable. The key is to do it in a way that is relevant to your message flow and user intent.

- Choose the right size

A study on email CTAs found the average height to be 47.9 pixels, with many clustered around 47 and 50 pixels. On mobile devices, buttons must be large enough to be easily tapped, which is why Apple's 44x44 pixel recommendation is a standard benchmark.

- Take advantage of the hover effect

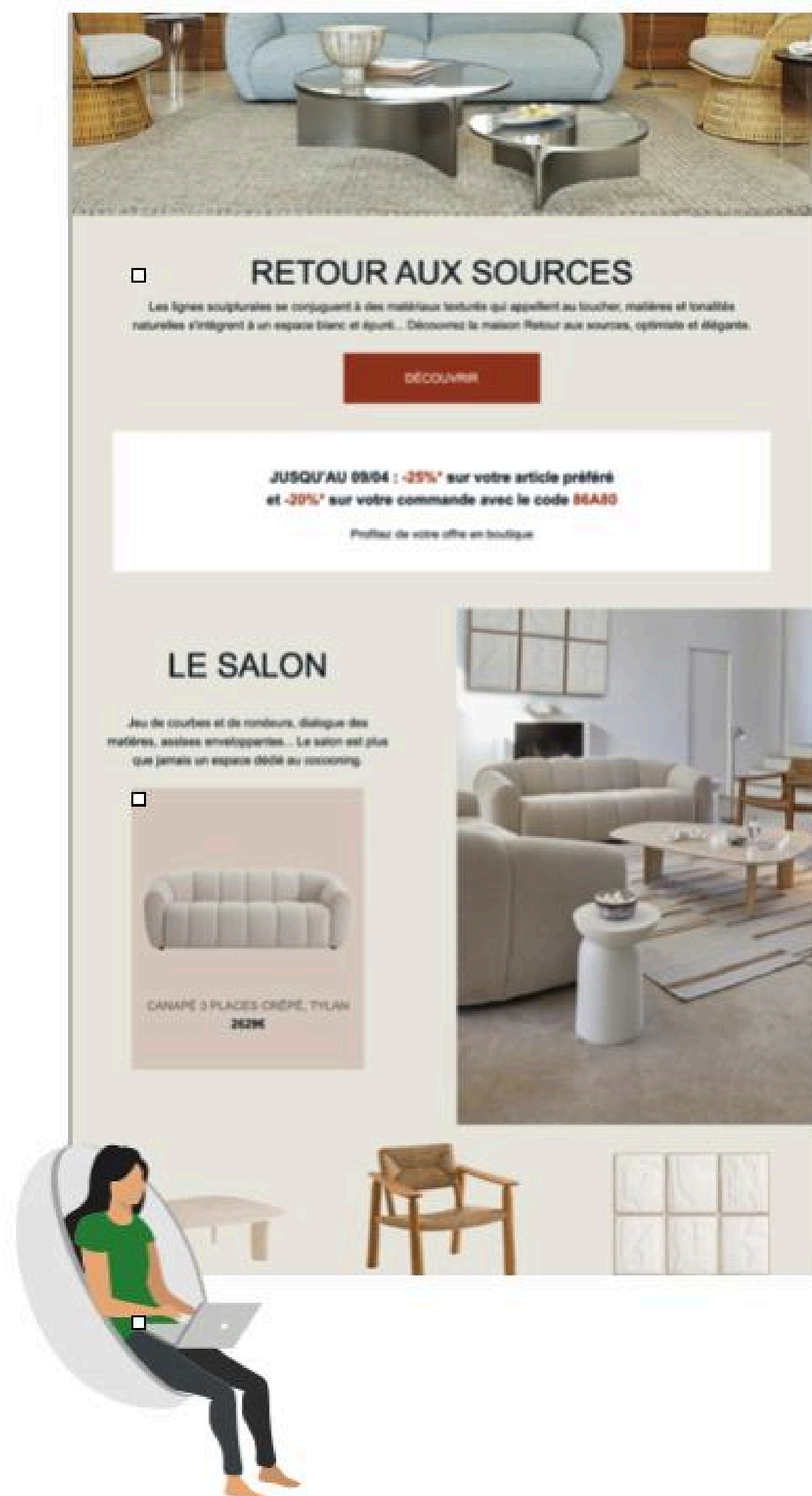
Email builders allow you to integrate hover effects in your emails, particularly on buttons. Use it to add an interactive touch to your emails that signals quality and professionalism.

- Don't forget the links

It would be a shame to include CTAs without associating them with links. Ensure that all your CTAs direct users to the intended destinations and that links are tested across various devices.

- Consider accessibility

Don't forget to provide the link title (tooltip) to comply with accessibility recommendations and to benefit the broadest audience from your emails.



Email builders make CTAs modular and testable, enabling you to easily experiment with size, colour, position, and wording without starting from scratch. This capability enables rapid A/B testing and optimization, ultimately improving conversion rates over time.

Business impact: Well-designed CTAs can increase click-through rates by 25–30% compared to poorly optimised buttons. For organisations sending thousands of emails per month, this improvement translates directly into revenue growth and increased customer engagement.

Integrate hover effects (where applicable)

Hover effects add subtle interactivity and sophistication to desktop emails, enhancing their visual appeal. They create **feedback loops that engage the reader**, whether through colour shifts on buttons or tooltips over links. Although not available on mobile devices, the presence of hover functionality contributes to the perception of quality and innovation.

This enhancement is significant for **B2B communications**, where desktop viewing remains essential and a professional presentation can influence business relationships.



- Create a global experience**
 Hover effects enable an enhanced experience that aligns with website interactions, creating a seamless and enjoyable customer journey across all touchpoints.
- Interactive and... innovative**
 Interactivity in emails is viewed as a key factor in innovation. The hover effect is therefore valuable for use in standing out and leaving a lasting impression with prospects and customers.
- A feature for diverse uses**
 The hover state can be applied to various types of content, including buttons, text, and images, providing multiple opportunities for enhanced engagement.
- Hover is great... on desktop**
 The hover state is only replicated on desktop (in compatible environments). Indeed, there is no hover effect on tablets and mobile devices that rely on touch usage.

Modern email builders support hover states visually, removing the need for custom CSS or code adjustments. This enables marketing teams to implement sophisticated interactions without requiring technical expertise, thereby maintaining a balance between innovation and operational efficiency.

Strategic consideration: While hover effects enhance desktop experience, ensure that mobile users receive equally compelling interactions through other design elements like clear visual hierarchy and prominent CTAs.

Use Retina-Ready images and correct media formats

On high-DPI (Retina) screens, images that haven't been double-scaled appear blurry or pixelated. To ensure sharp visuals, always export images at twice their displayed size. Maintain a **file resolution of 72 dpi** and ensure the total media weight **does not exceed 1.4 MB** to prevent slow loading or clipping.

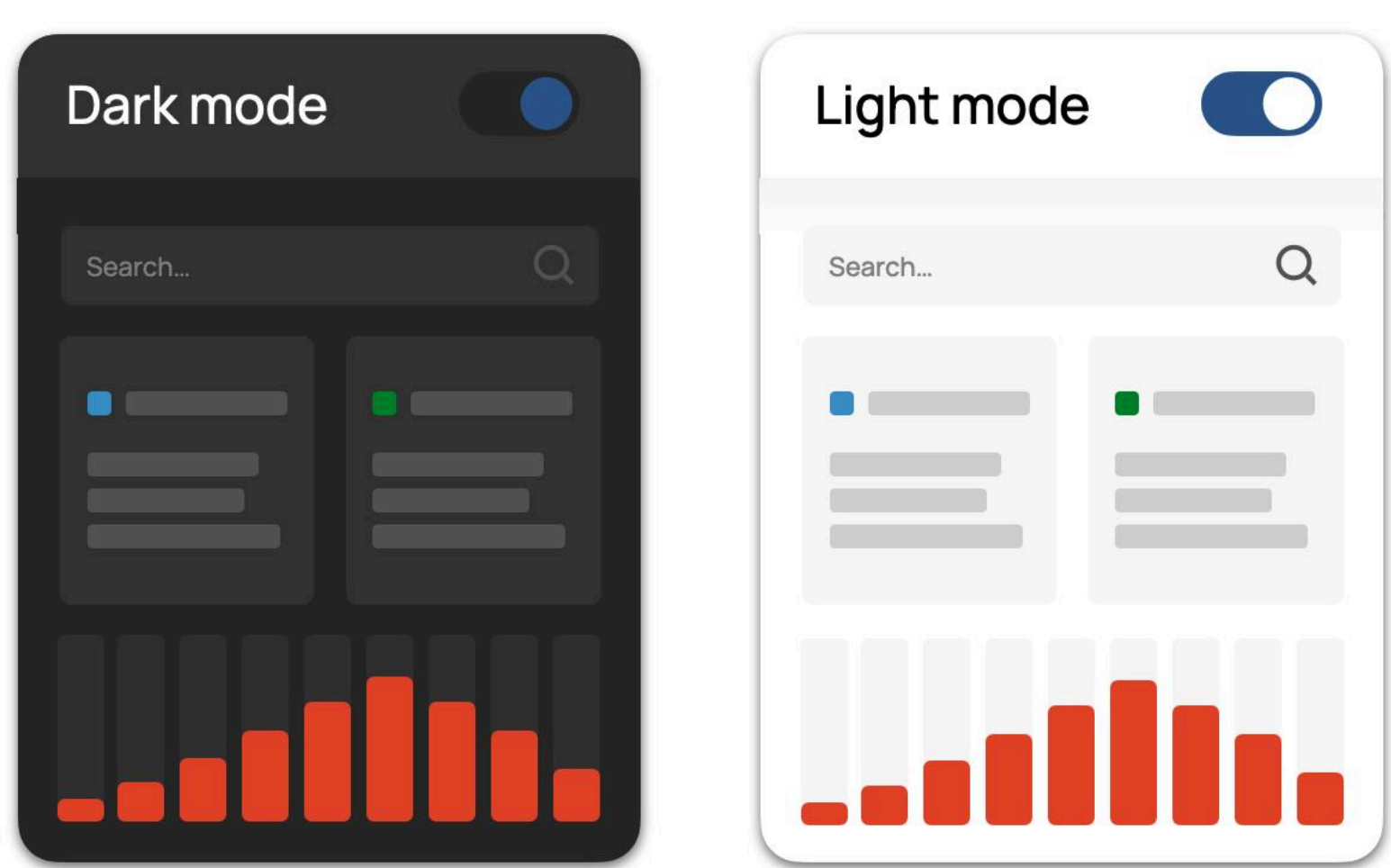
Image quality directly impacts brand perception and user experience. Blurry or pixelated images suggest **a lack of attention to detail** and can **undermine trust in professional communications**. With high-resolution displays now standard across devices, Retina optimisation is a baseline expectation rather than a premium feature.



- Double-scale for sharpness**
 Export all images at 2x their intended display size to ensure crisp rendering on high-DPI screens while maintaining fast loading times.
- Optimize file weight**
 Stay within a maximum total media weight of 1.4 MB per email to prevent slow loading, inbox clipping, and delivery issues.
- Choose formats strategically**
 Use JPEG for photographs, PNG for graphics with transparency, and consider WebP for advanced compression where supported.
- Maintain 72 DPI standard**
 Keep file resolution at 72 DPI for email use, as higher resolutions increase file size without improving display quality in email clients.

Email builders automate this process by compressing and optimising images upon upload and offering warnings for large files. This automation means that marketing teams can maintain professional image quality without needing to know how to optimise images.

Business impact: Professional image quality reinforces brand credibility and improves engagement rates. Studies show that emails with high-quality visuals receive 30% higher engagement than those with poor image optimization.



Design with dark mode in mind

Estimates of dark mode email usage among smartphone users range from around **25% to over 80%**, highlighting a significant and growing trend. Data from Litmus’s analytics tools shows an increase from 29% in 2020 to 40% by the end of 2022 among tracked Apple and Outlook for Mac subscribers, indicating growing user adoption. **Emails that aren’t adapted for dark mode** may show black logos on black backgrounds, unreadable text, or misaligned visuals.

This represents a significant shift in user behaviour that **directly affects the readability of emails and how brands are presented**. Organisations that ignore dark mode optimisation risk providing a poor user experience for almost half of their audience, which can lead to reduced engagement and a negative perception of the brand.

Professional email builders allow you to preview and optimise emails for different clients' dark mode behaviours, ensuring you retain control over layout and legibility regardless of the user's settings.



- Objective: Maximise readability
Avoid imposing a light configuration on those choosing dark mode. It is recommended to apply optimization techniques to enhance the display experience.
- Make PNG your ally
It is preferable to use transparent PNG images so that the color switch occurs cleanly in dark mode. Test the display, as you may need to add backgrounds to specific icons, especially when necessary.
- A preview ahead of time
It is possible to view colors in dark mode by sending and viewing test emails (for example, on the Gmail app in dark mode) before launching campaigns.
- Multiple messaging = Multiple Dark Modes
The email client imposes dark mode behavior. Therefore, there are different displays for each messaging service. The dark mode offered by Outlook differs from that provided by the Gmail app, which is also distinct from the display in Gmail webmail.

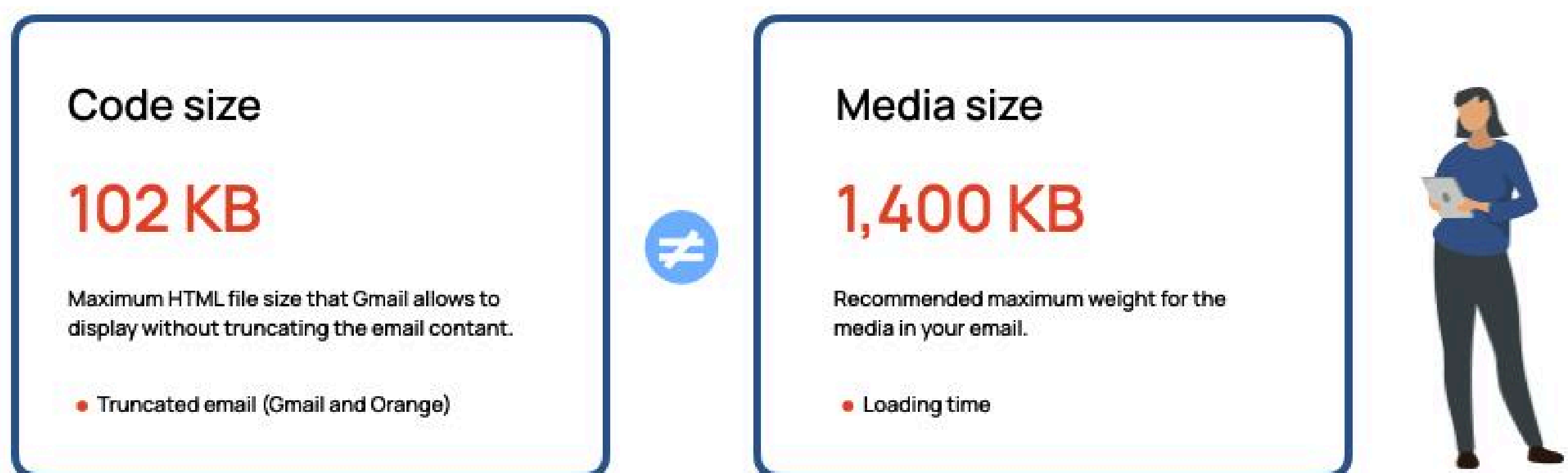
Each email client handles dark mode differently, necessitating strategic design choices that are compatible across multiple environments. Modern tools offer preview capabilities that display how emails render in various dark mode implementations, allowing teams to optimize for maximum compatibility.

Business impact: Dark mode optimization ensures a consistent brand presentation and readability across all user preferences, maintaining high engagement rates and a professional appearance regardless of display settings.

Control code and media weight

Email clients such as Gmail cut off HTML code in messages **larger than 102 KB**. Oversized or bloated layouts not only ruin the user experience but also often cause emails to be sent to the spam folder. To stay under these limits, use clean code, compress images, and remove unnecessary elements.

Code weight directly affects both deliverability and user experience. Exceeding client limits can result in emails not displaying correctly, being placed in the spam folder, or being blocked completely. This technical constraint has strategic implications: organisations that cannot control code weight may experience reduced campaign effectiveness and potential reputational damage with email providers.



- **Monitor HTML size limits**
Stay well below Gmail's 102 KB HTML limit to ensure complete message delivery and avoid automatic clipping, which can break the user experience.
- **Eliminate code bloat**
Remove unnecessary inline styles, unused CSS declarations, and redundant markup that increases file size without adding functionality.
- **Optimize media compression**
Balance image quality with file size to maintain visual impact while staying within weight constraints across all email elements.
- **Validate code structure**
Ensure clean, semantic HTML that renders consistently across email clients while minimizing file size and complexity.

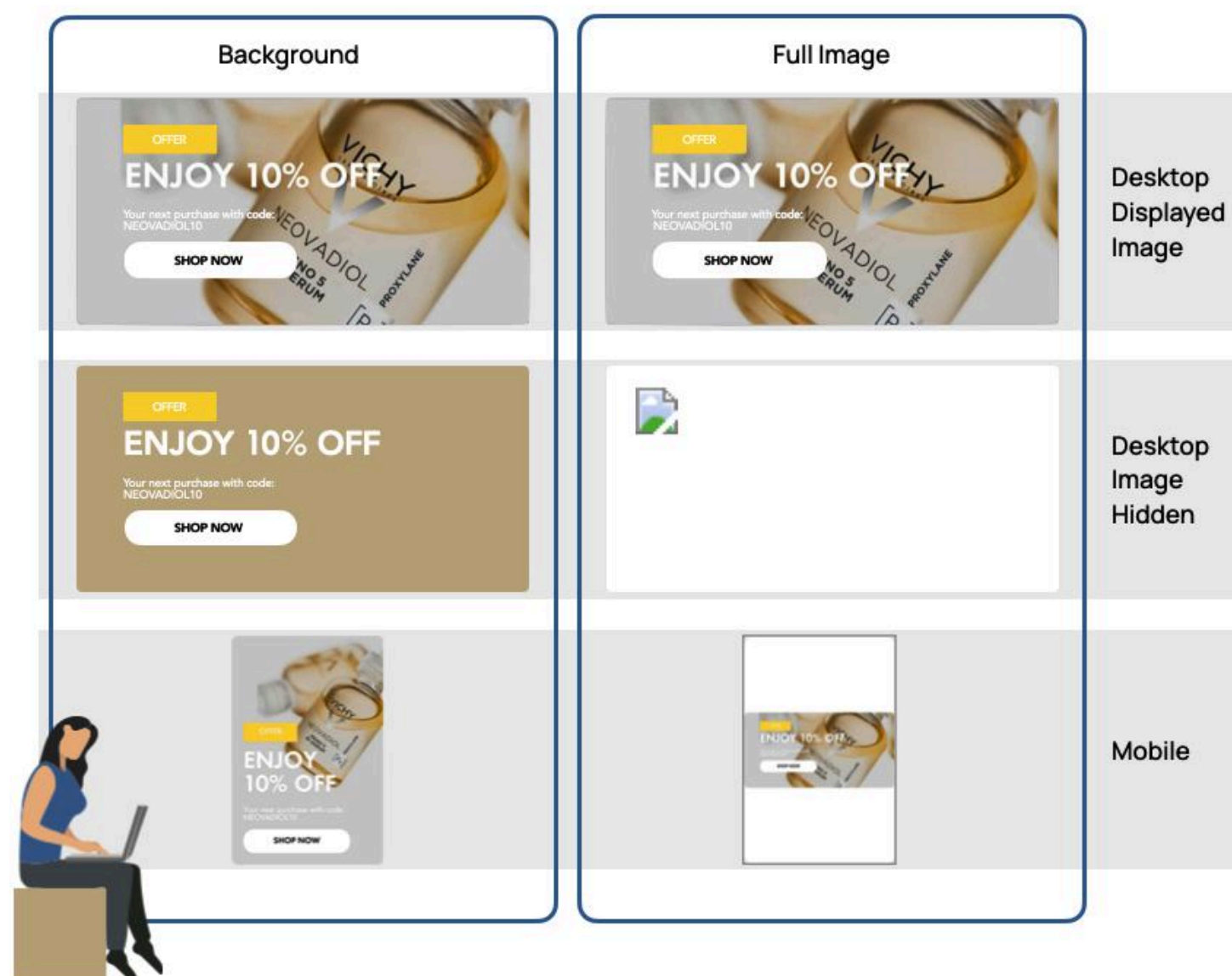
With email builders, code is automatically optimized and validated, so marketers don't need to worry about hidden bloat or broken rendering. This automation ensures that technical constraints don't limit creative execution while maintaining deliverability standards.

Business impact: Proper code weight management ensures consistent email delivery and rendering, preventing lost opportunities due to technical failures that recipients attribute to poor professionalism.

Avoid full images – use background layers instead

Although embedding text inside image banners may seem simple, it creates significant problems: screen readers cannot read it, it does not adapt to dark mode, and it loads more slowly. A better approach is to **use background layers with live HTML** text positioned on top.

This design approach addresses several strategic challenges simultaneously: **compliance with accessibility standards, compatibility with dark mode, and loading performance**. Organisations that rely on text-heavy images risk reduced engagement from users with disabilities, a poor dark mode experience, and slower loading times, all of which can lead to higher abandonment rates.



- **Prioritize accessibility**
Live HTML text ensures screen readers can access your content, expanding your effective audience and meeting compliance requirements.
- **Enable dark mode adaptation**
HTML text automatically adjusts to dark mode settings, whereas text embedded in images remains static and may become unreadable.
- **Improve loading performance**
Background images with overlay text load faster than complex, text-heavy image files, which reduces bounce rates and improves the user experience.
- **Maintain design flexibility**
Background layers allow easy text updates, localization, and A/B testing without requiring new image creation for each variation.

This approach ensures flexibility, faster rendering, and improved accessibility. It is also straightforward to implement with email builders that offer visual layering tools. While any competent builder enables this, the JustRelate Marketing Home saves these components as **brand-approved, reusable assets, thereby eliminating the risk of unauthorised, off-brand image usage** across campaigns.

Business impact: Background layer techniques improve engagement across diverse user groups while maintaining design quality and operational efficiency for campaign management.

Prioritise accessibility and inclusivity

Globally, **15-16% of people live with some form of disability** (WHO). Emails that are accessible – those with high contrast, alt text, a proper reading order, and large tap targets – not only serve this group, but also improve usability for everyone.

Accessibility represents both ethical responsibility and business opportunity. Organizations that ignore accessibility exclude potential customers and may face compliance issues in regulated markets. For example, **the German Accessibility Strengthening Act (BFSG)**, effective since June 28, 2025, requires new websites and digital communications to be accessible to all users. Beyond compliance requirements, accessible design principles enhance usability for all users, resulting in **higher overall engagement rates**.

- **Watch out for contrast**
Use online tools to check the contrast of your colors and ensure readability for users with visual impairments and in various lighting conditions.
- **Pay attention to size**
Be mindful of the size of elements, mainly buttons and text, to accommodate users with motor difficulties and ensure touch targets meet minimum standards.
- **Don't forget alternative text**
Alternative text and titles on links are essential for people with disabilities: remember to include them for all images and interactive elements.



Why care about email accessibility

- 2.2 billion people worldwide have trouble seeing.
- 9-12 % of the world's population have dyslexia (every 10th person).
- 300 min people are color blind (1 in 12 men and 1 in 200 women).



Professional email builders typically include accessibility checks, enforce minimum contrast ratios, and allow you to set alt text and ARIA labels without coding expertise. This automation ensures compliance while reducing the technical burden on marketing teams.

Business impact: Accessible email design expands your effective audience, reduces legal compliance risks, and improves overall user experience quality, leading to higher engagement rates across all user segments.

Without ARIA

```
<a href="https://x.com/yourbrand">
  
</a>
```



With ARIA

```
<a href="https://x.com/yourbrand" aria-label="Follow us on X">
  
</a>
```

Checklist: 10 questions to audit your email excellence

1.	Is my email mobile-optimized and responsive across all devices?	☐
2.	Are fonts legible, consistently styled, and properly hierarchical?	☐
3.	Do CTAs stand out clearly, drive action, and include hover effects?	☐
4.	Have I tested dark mode rendering across major email clients?	☐
5.	Is white space structured strategically to guide the reader's attention?	☐
6.	Are images Retina-optimized, lightweight, and under 1.4MB total?	☐
7.	Is my total HTML code under 102 KB to avoid clipping?	☐
8.	Have I used background layers with live text instead of text-heavy images?	☐
9.	Does my email meet accessibility standards?	☐
10.	Can I iterate and test layouts quickly using my tools?	☐

4

**The business impact:
What you gain by
building emails right**

Implementing the ten strategic standards outlined in this white paper does more than just achieve incremental improvement. They transform the economics and operational capability of email marketing. Organisations that implement these advanced practices report measurable gains across four critical dimensions that directly affect performance.



Revenue acceleration through faster time-to-market

As markets accelerate, the correlation between campaign speed and revenue capture has become increasingly apparent. Launching a campaign quickly can mean the difference between being relevant and being irrelevant. Yet, many teams still rely on workflows involving multiple handovers between the strategy, design, development, and QA teams, as well as external agencies.

This speed gap represents lost revenue. Organisations that can respond to market opportunities within hours capture value that their competitors miss entirely. Professional email builders transform this operational constraint into a competitive advantage.

With a professional email builder:

- **Emails can be created and sent within hours, not days or weeks**, enabling faster reactions to promotions, trends, or breaking news that drive immediate revenue impact
- **Reusable components eliminate the need to start from scratch** each time, speeding up everything from testing to localization across multiple markets
- **In-house control reduces dependency** on external resources, enabling immediate changes and last-minute adjustments without friction or additional costs
- **AI accelerates production** by generating subject lines, body copy variants, and translations, enabling global teams to scale up more quickly with localised versions that maintain brand consistency

Brand excellence through quality and consistency

Consistent, professional execution builds measurable brand equity and customer trust. Emails that render incorrectly, feature inconsistent branding or ignore accessibility standards undermine trust and reduce engagement, which has a direct impact on customer relationships and revenue potential.

By following the outlined best practices and leveraging builder-based workflows:

- **Consistency is built in**, with tone of voice, brand styles, reusable design components, and layout templates all maintaining visual standards across teams and regions. Reusable blocks ensure consistent layouts, spacing, and styles, regardless of who creates the email.
- **Email rendering issues are minimised** thanks to tested modules that work across all major email clients and devices, ensuring a professional presentation for every recipient.
- **Accessibility and dark mode readiness are integrated** parts of the build process, expanding effective audience reach and ensuring compliance with regulations.
- **AI-powered content checks ensure** that the tone of voice, word choice, and length of the email align with brand standards before it is sent, reducing the time spent on quality control.

The result is email output that's faster and more polished, and universally readable on desktops, mobile devices, or in dark mode environments.

Cost control through operational efficiency

Shifting from external dependency to internal capability creates substantial cost advantages that increase year on year. Legacy email workflows often require the involvement of an agency, developer input, or repeated internal approvals, even for minor changes. This slows down production, limits flexibility, and increases costs without improving results.

Modern tools and a modular email setup can help to overcome these issues:

- **Marketing teams can handle the majority** of production tasks themselves, reducing the number of external briefings and reviews
- **Reduced handoffs and fewer approval cycles**, as non-technical users can build and publish without waiting on developers or designers
- **Lower production costs per campaign**, as fewer external hours are needed while maintaining higher quality standards
- **AI support reduces copywriting overhead** and removes repetitive tasks like formatting or link checking, freeing human resources for higher-value work

This increased efficiency means that resources can be redirected towards higher-value activities, such as testing, personalisation, and cross-channel coordination, which deliver better results.

Market dominance through increased agility and performance

The convergence of speed, quality, and efficiency gives rise to strategic capabilities that go beyond operational metrics. When teams can swiftly launch, test, and adapt their messaging, they can respond more quickly to market opportunities and customer behaviour.

In practice, this looks like:

- **Shorter feedback loops** enable campaign iterations within days rather than weeks, allowing for the capture of market momentum.
- **More frequent testing** yields better data and smarter creative decisions, ultimately enhancing campaign performance over time.
- **Personalisation at scale** is made possible by dynamic, modular content blocks that adapt to different audience segments.
- **Teams are always ready** to act the moment an opportunity arises, whether competitive, seasonal, or market-driven.

This level of agility ultimately enables marketing teams to become faster, smarter, and more effective, turning email into a proactive growth engine that delivers measurable business results rather than just facilitating communication.

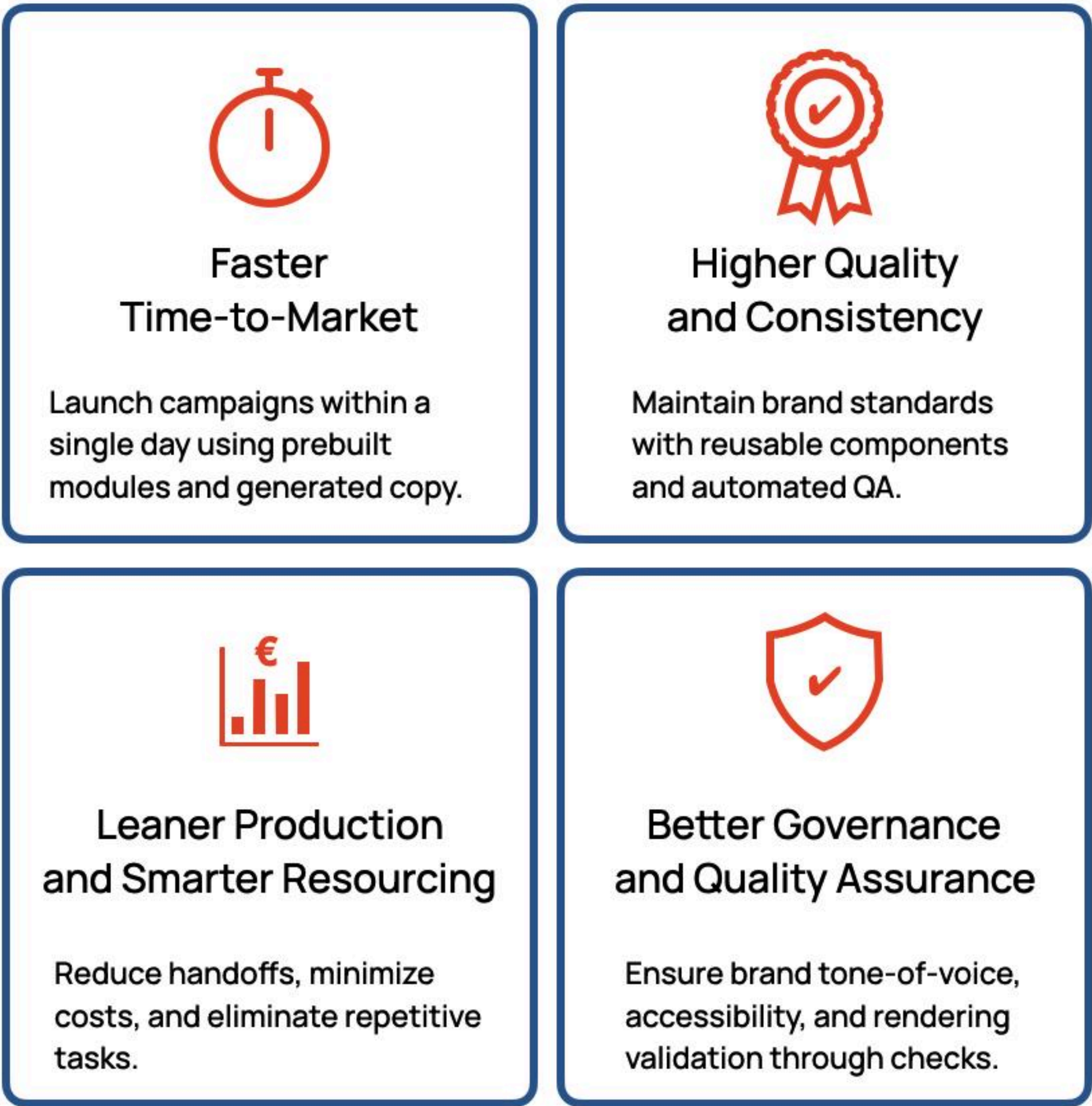
5

Conclusion: The transformative imperative of email building

The gap between the technical capabilities of email and its organisational execution has never been wider. While the importance of the channel is now widely recognised, success in modern email marketing depends on achieving operational efficiency.

The transformation from tactical email production to strategic marketing capability requires operational evolution. Teams that master this transition gain measurable advantages in market responsiveness, customer engagement, and revenue generation. The ten strategic standards we've outlined provide the framework for this transformation.

Modern email marketing success rests on three integrated capabilities: advanced tools that enable rapid execution, AI that accelerates content creation while maintaining brand consistency, and composable systems that allow teams to respond to market opportunities within hours rather than days.



The path forward

The strategic choice facing marketing organisations is clear: they can either continue with legacy workflows that limit growth potential, or they can invest in modern email production capabilities that match market demands. The technology exists. The methodologies are proven. The business case is compelling.

While professional email builders and AI-powered workflows represent the enabling technology, the gap between advanced and basic email operations continues to widen. Organizations that master modern email production gain sustainable competitive advantages, while those relying on legacy processes face declining performance and missed opportunities.

Those ready to transform their email operations from tactical execution to strategic capability should take the next step. The standards are in place. The benefits are quantifiable. The only remaining question is when to implement them.

Why JustRelate defines the standard for professional email building

With over 30 years of expertise in digitalizing customer relationships and 15 consecutive years of leadership in email building, JustRelate has earned the trust of global enterprises, including L'Oréal, Nestlé, Siemens, Lufthansa, BNP Paribas, and TAG Heuer. This enterprise's credibility stems from solving complex marketing operations challenges that generic email tools cannot address.

JustRelate's competitive advantage lies in three proprietary technologies that competitors cannot easily replicate. The Marketing Home transforms abstract composable architecture into concrete operational reality through its hierarchical Brand → Campaign → Project structure that mirrors natural marketing workflows. Unlike flat file systems, this project-centric architecture creates unified workspaces where all tools, data sources, and content workflows integrate seamlessly.

The platform's AI implementation represents a fundamental advancement beyond generic content generation. Through Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) and Model Context Protocol (MCP), AI assistants maintain a persistent understanding across the entire marketing ecosystem. This means AI-generated content draws from specific brand guidelines, campaign objectives, and project metadata rather than shallow prompts, dramatically reducing hallucinations while ensuring brand consistency.

The Dartagnan Email Builder operates within this intelligent infrastructure, combining years of email building refinement with cutting-edge composable architecture. Sophisticated campaigns are built from customizable building blocks, maintaining enterprise-level reliability. Advanced features, including sliders, hover effects, video integration, and full-width layouts, function with intelligent fallbacks across all environments, supported by integrated quality control that detects compliance issues before sending.

This creates a strategic environment in which marketing teams can build better emails faster, and which are more aligned with business objectives than ever before. JustRelate isn't just another email builder — it's an enterprise-ready platform that delivers the speed, quality, and innovation that modern marketing demands at scale.

The strategic choice is clear: continue with tactical email tools that limit growth potential, or implement the proven platform that transforms email operations into a competitive advantage. The technology exists. The enterprise validation is established. The transformation begins with your decision.

TL;DR: JustRelate combines over 30 years of enterprise expertise, a proprietary composable architecture, and contextual AI to create marketing operations capabilities that generic email tools cannot replicate.



APPENDIX

Glossary

Accessibility	Designing emails to be accessible and understandable for people with various disabilities. This includes using alt text, maintaining proper contrast ratios, using readable font sizes, and employing semantic HTML.
ALT Text (Alternative Text)	Text descriptions added to images in emails, allowing screen readers to describe visuals to visually impaired users. It also acts as fallback content if an image fails to load.
AI Agent	An autonomous or semi-autonomous software component that completes tasks using artificial intelligence and learned behavior.
AI Assistant	A context-aware system embedded in the marketing workflow that enhances human productivity by generating, optimizing, or analyzing content and decisions.
API (Application Programming Interface)	A standardized interface that allows different software applications to communicate and interact.
ARIA (Accessible Rich Internet Applications)	ARIA labels are attributes used in web development to provide accessible names for elements, especially when those elements lack visible text. They help assistive technologies, like screen readers, convey the purpose of interactive elements to users with disabilities.
Best-of-Breed	A strategy for building a technology stack involves selecting the best available application for each specific function, such as email or CRM, rather than relying on the modules provided by a single vendor.
Brand Framework	A set of principles, tone-of-voice guidelines, and strategic anchors such as the corporate identity and corporate design guides, ensuring consistency across all marketing expressions and experiences.
Campaign Hierarchy	A structured way to organize marketing activity across levels such as Brand → Campaign → Project → Subproject, improving clarity and orchestration.
Channel Architecture	The deliberate structure and assignment of roles within communication channels—such as email, web, social media, and advertising—within a broader campaign strategy.
Composable Email Setup	An email creation system built from modular, reusable components (e.g., headers, CTAs, footers). It enables rapid assembly, testing, and updates across various teams and campaigns.

Content Atomization

The practice of breaking down long-form content into modular assets, such as snippets, visuals, and variants, for reuse across formats and channels.

Data Activation

The process of turning raw customer data into actionable insights for targeting, personalization, and automation.

DKIM (DomainKeys Identified Mail)

Email authentication protocol - Adds a cryptographic signature to prove the message hasn't been altered.

DMARC (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting & Conformance)

Email authentication protocol - Provides instructions to receiving servers on how to handle failed SPF/DKIM checks.

Email authentication protocol

Email authentication protocols, such as SPF, DKIM, or DMARC, help verify the sender's identity and improve deliverability by reducing the likelihood of emails being marked as spam or phishing.

Email Builder

A software tool that enables users—typically marketers—to create responsive, accessible, and brand-consistent emails without writing HTML code. Email builders often include drag-and-drop interfaces, template systems, and testing features.

Fragmentation

The disconnection between tools, data, or teams often leads to inefficiencies and siloed operations.

Grounding

The process of providing AI systems with contextually relevant and structured information—such as brand rules, campaign metadata, or project structure—so their outputs are aligned, accurate, and actionable.

Hallucination (AI)

An AI system generates plausible-sounding but inaccurate or irrelevant content when it lacks proper grounding or structured context.

Marketing Signals

Real-time indicators derived from user behavior, engagement, or system data that trigger adaptive content or next-best actions.

MarTech Stack

The collective ecosystem of interconnected tools and platforms that a marketing team uses to plan, execute, and measure their strategies and campaigns.

Modularity

The design principle that separates functionality into interchangeable, independent components.

Prompt Engineering	The craft of designing inputs that guide AI tools to produce relevant, accurate, and high-quality output.
RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation)	An AI technique that retrieves real-time information from a defined dataset to ground generated content in factual, contextual data.
Reactivation/Retention	An approach in email marketing that combines retention and reintegration tactics to keep existing subscribers engaged and reintroduce lapsed or inactive contacts into the customer journey.
Responsive Design	Describes a website, application, or digital content whose code adapts to all types of devices (desktop, tablet, mobile, car, watch, ...). The content automatically adjusts to the screen size and orientation, all from a single HTML code.
Retina Display / Retina Images	High-resolution screens require images to be rendered at double the pixel density (2x) for clarity and sharpness. Apple uses the term Retina to highlight the pixel density on specific screens integrated into the brand's devices as well as some monitors.
SPF (Sender Policy Framework)	Email authentication protocols - Authorize specific IP addresses to send emails on behalf of your domain.
Structured Composition	Organizing marketing work into well-defined units that align content, tools, and AI with strategic context.
Toolchain	A set of software tools linked together to support the flow of marketing activities.

About the author



JustRelate Group brings over 30 years of experience in digitalising customer relationships for mid-sized and large organizations. Their **CX Cloud** platform—trusted by companies such as L'Oréal, Nestlé, Siemens, Lufthansa, BNP Paribas, TAG Heuer, and many others —provides modular capabilities across content creation, engagement, automation, and AI-powered digital experiences.

With a deep understanding of marketing, sales, and service operations, JustRelate combines cutting-edge technology with an agile, customer-centric approach. Our flat hierarchies and rapid responsiveness enable tailored implementations that align precisely with business needs.

Equipped with AI assistants integrated into the Create Suite, such as SAM and NOAM, JustRelate empowers teams to generate, translate, and optimize content seamlessly, delivering higher-quality output while supporting efficiency and brand consistency.

As the creator of the **Dartagnan Email Builder**, JustRelate brings this white paper to life with both domain expertise and practical experience. Our vision for **The Home of Composable Marketing** reflects our mission: to transform composability from concept into actionable, everyday marketing excellence.

JustRelate operates across multiple locations in **France, Germany, and Poland**, supporting customers throughout Europe with local expertise and international reach.

30+

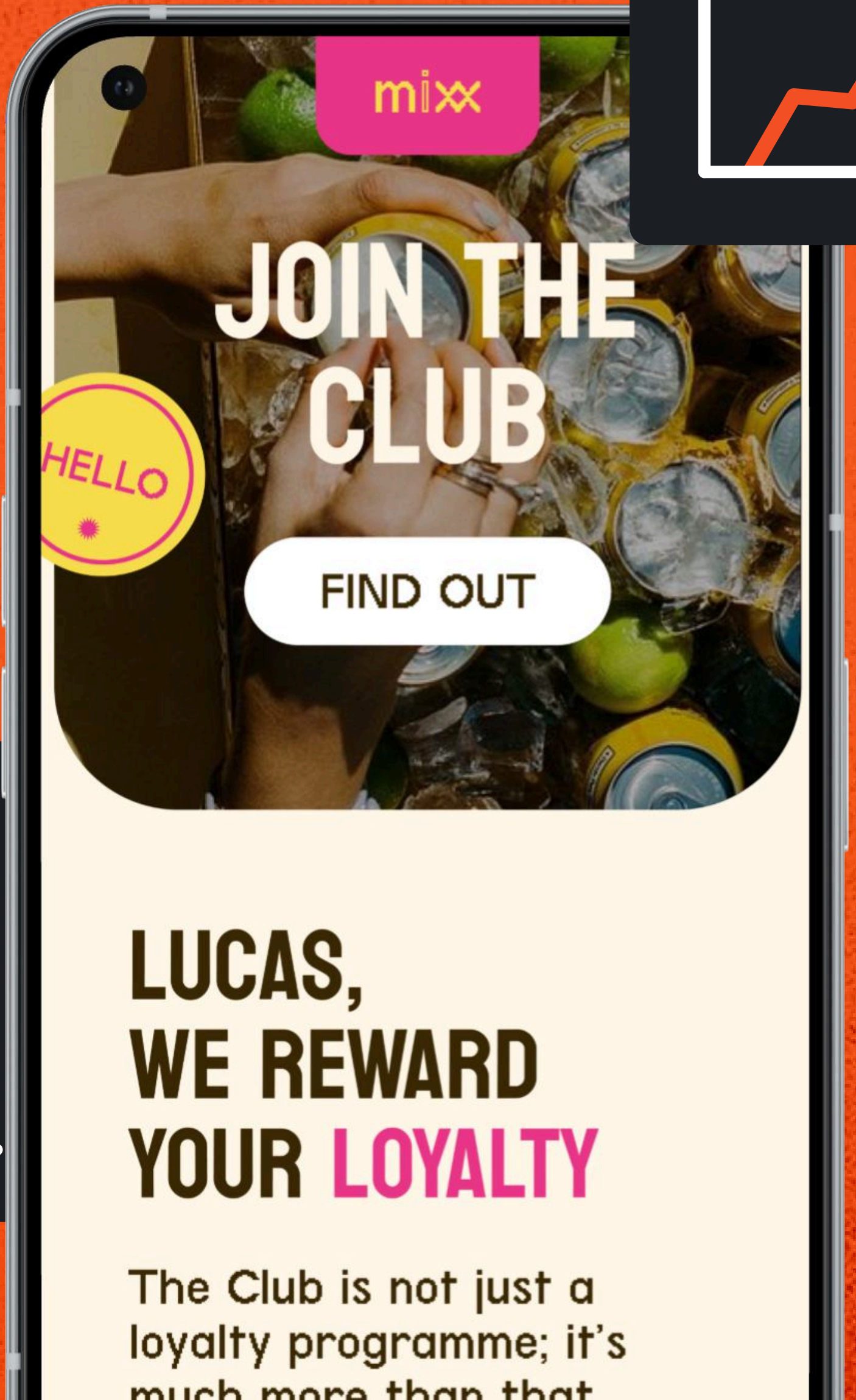
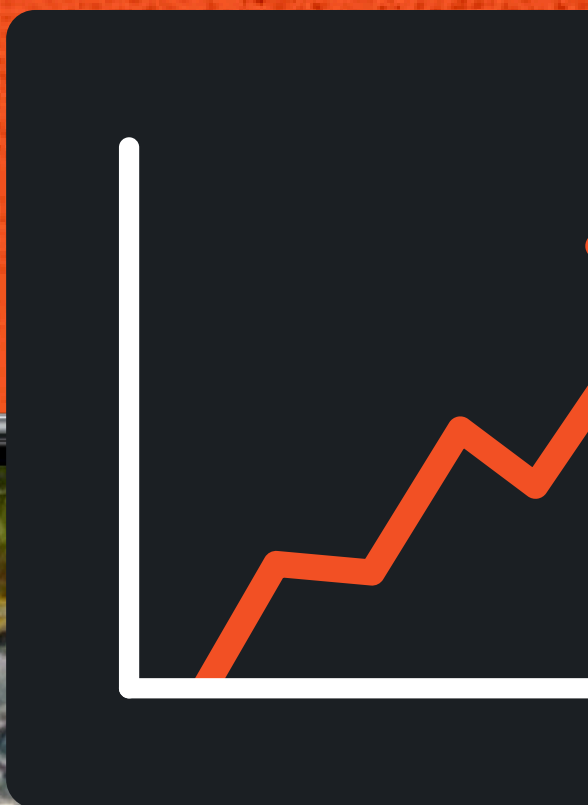
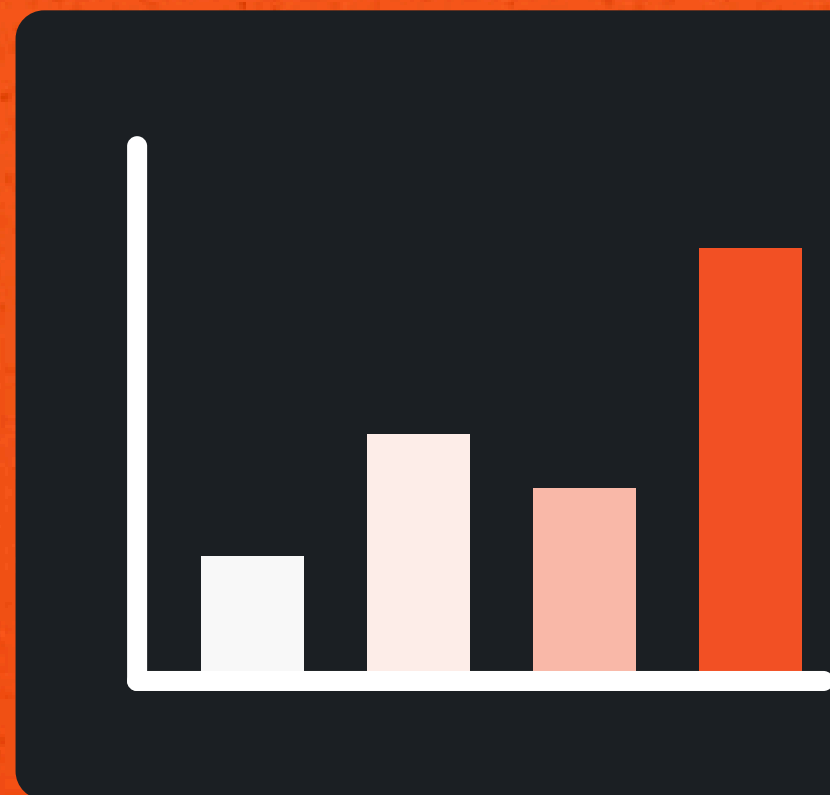
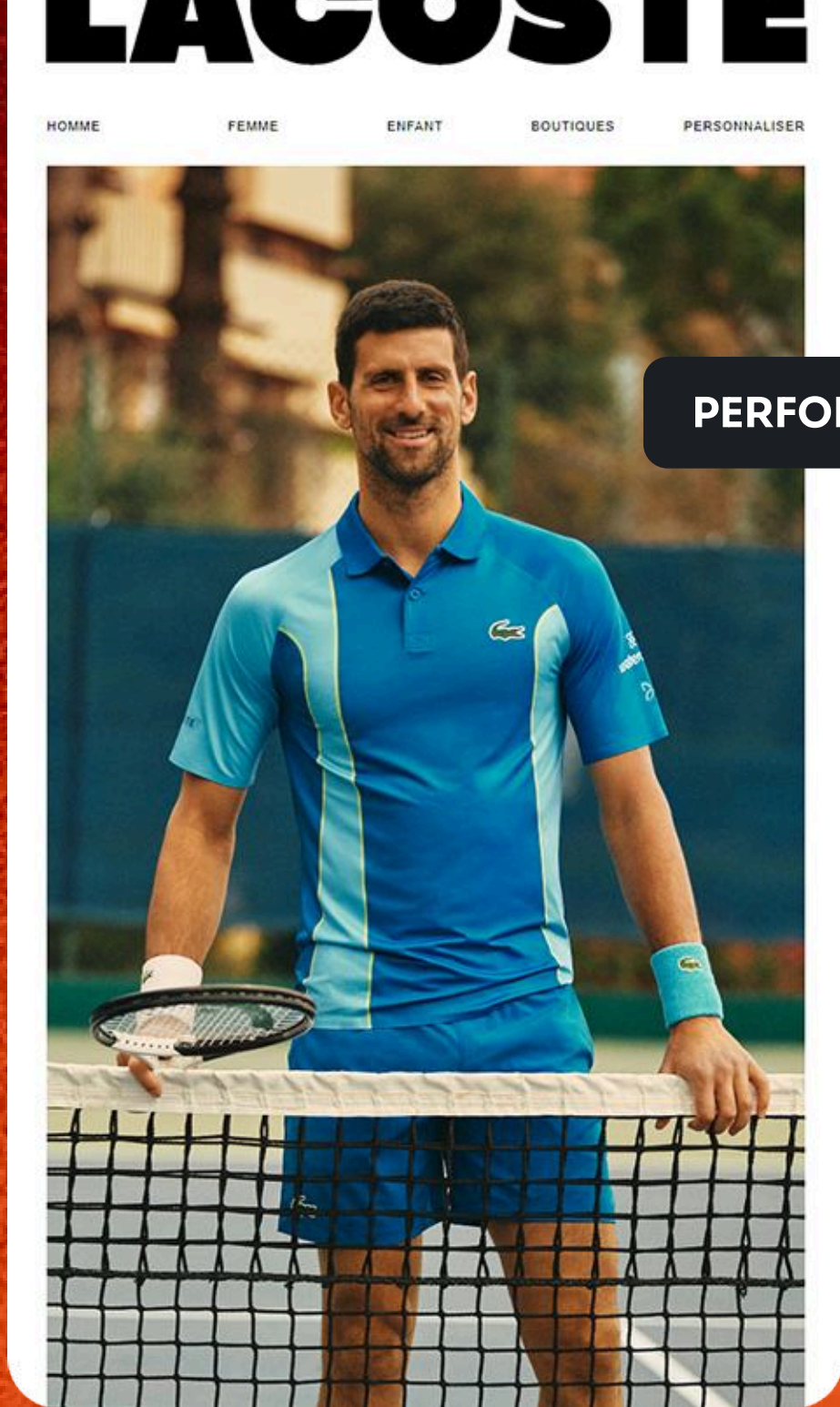
years of
innovation

170+

awesome
teammates

650+

happy
customers



Ready to **win** your email performance?

 justrelate.com
 info@justrelate.com

