



Error Emails: The definitive report on mistakes, errors and apologies that never needed to happen

Introduction

The most nerve-wracking moment in any email marketer's life comes when it's time to push the "Send" button. Here's a sample of what goes through even the most seasoned email veteran's mind:

- Did we replace the default subject line and preheader?
- Did we use the right offer or the right promo code?
- Did we add the right images?
- Are we sending to the right audience?
- Did we spell anything wrong?
- Is the personalization correct?
- Did I use the correct merge tags for my ESP?
- Does it look right on any device my subscribers use to read it?
- Is it accessible for as many of my subscribers as it can be?
- Do I have time to run it through the link checker one more time?

It doesn't matter how simple or sophisticated the email creation process is or whether the email team is one person pulling all the levers or a distributed team of 20 or more. Errors have a way of slipping past the data team, proofreaders, list managers and anyone with a hand in the process.

Errors happen to everybody, right?

Every email marketer has a story about something going haywire in even the most carefully plotted email campaigns. After all, errors are a fact of life in email marketing - or are they?

Aside from anecdotes shared on public forums, at conferences or marketer Happy Hours, what's the state of play with email errors? There's little or no empirical research measuring error rates, where errors are happening and what teams are doing to detect and reduce errors.

Until now, that is.



What you'll learn in this study

This report opens a window into the pre-deployment and error-management processes used by email teams large and small, at companies that sell to consumers, business or both, in the United States, the UK, Canada and all around the globe.

Findings will answer these key questions:

- What are the most common errors that email teams make?
- Do most teams check emails manually or use an automated process to detect errors?
- What factors correlate with higher error incidences?
- Which teams are more likely to use formal pre-deployment processes?
- Who gets the final say on an email campaign or automation series?
- Which elements of the email message are teams more likely to test before sending?

How to use this report to improve your email pre-deployment process

First and foremost, this report will show you how email teams like yours are faring with mistakes and how they manage the pre-deployment process. Use the findings to compare your team's methods and results with marketing teams in general and with teams comparable to yours in size, market area (B2B, B2C or both), and pre-deployment processes.

Use this as a resource for understanding the state of play in email creation, testing and approval. Use it to benchmark your own team's efforts and discover where you are outperforming your marketing peers or where you might detect areas to improve.

Our findings can also help you build a case for additional budget to overhaul your pre-deployment process, especially if you have been considering whether to replace a manual process with an automated platform to reduce human errors.

"You can have the best creative with the best offer with the best segmentation, but it will all fall flat if there is an error in the email. Nothing can take the place of having a solid process before you hit the send button to ensure an error-free email."

Andrew Kordek
Founder, The Email Realist.

Major findings

- 1.** Errors increase when pre-deployment testing isn't done on every email. Six in every 10 respondents who don't test every email reported sending an email with at least one mistake in it.
- 2.** More than 50% of respondents follow a written pre-deployment checklist. Larger email teams are more likely than single-person departments or smaller teams to use checklists during pre-deployment.
- 3.** Pre-deployment testing remains a manual process for most marketers, regardless of team size or frequency of sending.
- 4.** As team size increases, so does confidence that emails are error-free. Heavier senders - brands that send more campaigns in a shorter amount of time - are more likely to send mistakes in emails. Copy errors, wrong links/CTA and wrong audience are the most common errors.

About this study

This research is based on the findings of a survey conducted by John Thies, co-founder and CEO of Email on Acid, and Kath Pay, CEO and founder of Holistic Email Marketing, in the second quarter of 2020.



Findings

Respondent snapshot

1. Email teams most likely to have two to five members: Team size often determines how much time marketers have to devote to all aspects of email planning and campaign management. The majority (51%) of respondents work in email teams of two to five members and six to 10 members (20%). One-person teams make up 19% of respondents, while marketers working on larger teams (11 to more than 20) were 10% of the total.

2. Larger companies, bigger email teams: As you might expect, company size correlates with team size. Small to midsize businesses (under 100 employees) were more likely to have one-person teams, although a surprising 13% of enterprise companies (500+ employees) also had one-person teams.

On the other end of the scale, larger companies (more than 100 employees) were significantly more likely to have more people on their email teams. For example, the majority of companies claiming email teams of 10 or more members had 500+ employees.

3. Split between B2B and B2C: The largest group of respondents (51%) manage marketing for both B2B and B2C companies. Another 28% handle mainly B2B, while 21% are in B2C.

4. Respondents in the trenches: While 22% of respondents work at the director level and above, the majority are managers (31%) and coordinators/specialists (27%) with the remainder (20%) holding other titles.

State of play with automated emails

The transition from mainly manual processes to automation is one of the great transformations in email marketing.

In this section of our study, we wanted to learn how extensively companies have adopted automated email programs and which industries are more likely to use email automation. One survey question asks companies whether they test their triggered-email templates as well as their broadcast templates.

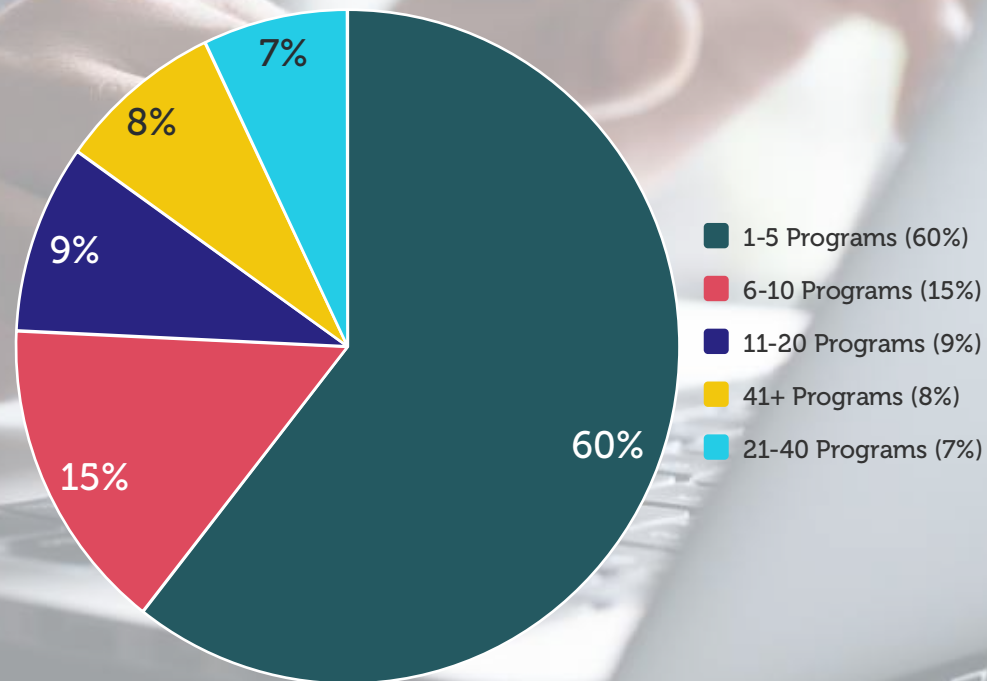
Here's what we learned:

Companies are largely at the basic level of automation for email programs.

Findings show 60% of companies use one to five automations in their email marketing programs. This seems low given the proliferation of automations such as multi-email onboarding programs, browse and cart abandonment and post purchase follow-up that have become standard on many email sending platforms.

The next largest group - 15% - use six to 10 automations, while 7% are starting to push the envelope with more than 40.

Fig. 1 - How many automated programs do you currently have?



Neither B2B nor B2C leads in using automation, although some industries clearly have invested in more programs.

When we went deeper into the automation results, we expected to find that one sector might be taking greater advantage of automation than the other. But what we learned is that both business and consumer marketers are, overall, still at the beginner level.

Our take: Broken down by sector, the most common answer is one to five automated programs: 59% for B2C and 58% for B2B. When the two categories with the greatest number of automations were grouped together (21-40 automations and 40+), business marketers held a slight advantage (17% compared with 15% for consumer marketers), although this was not within the +/- 5% confidence level.

However, when looking at specific industries, we see for B2B that IT Services/ Software and Marketing sectors tend to use more automated programs. In B2C, Travel and Retail reported using the highest level of automations (41+).

Fig. 2 - Number of automated programs - B2C

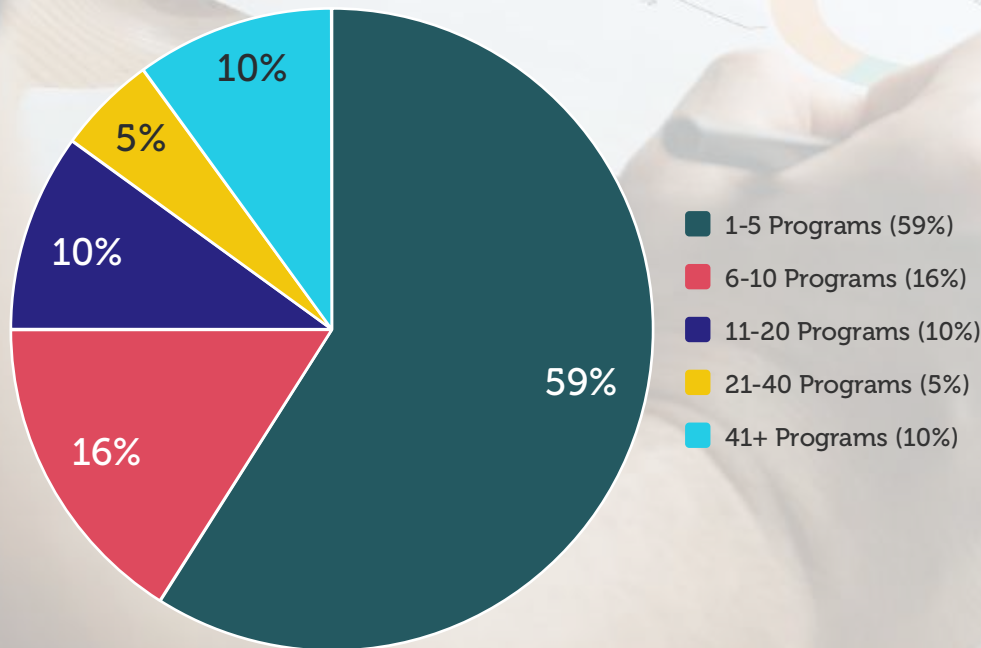


Fig. 3 - Number of automated programs - B2B

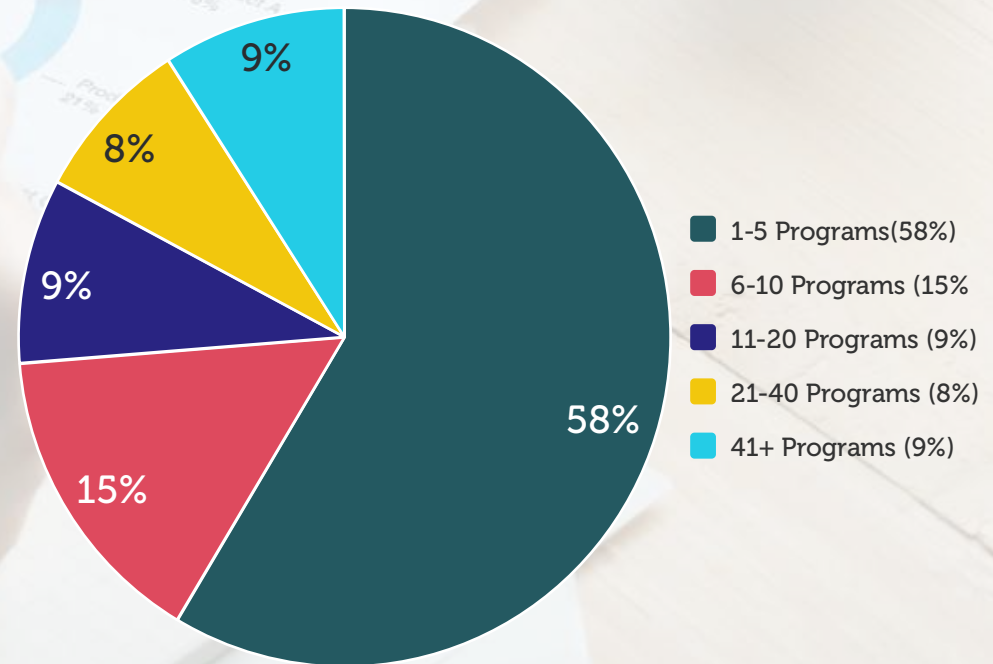


Fig. 4 - 1-5 Automated programs per industry

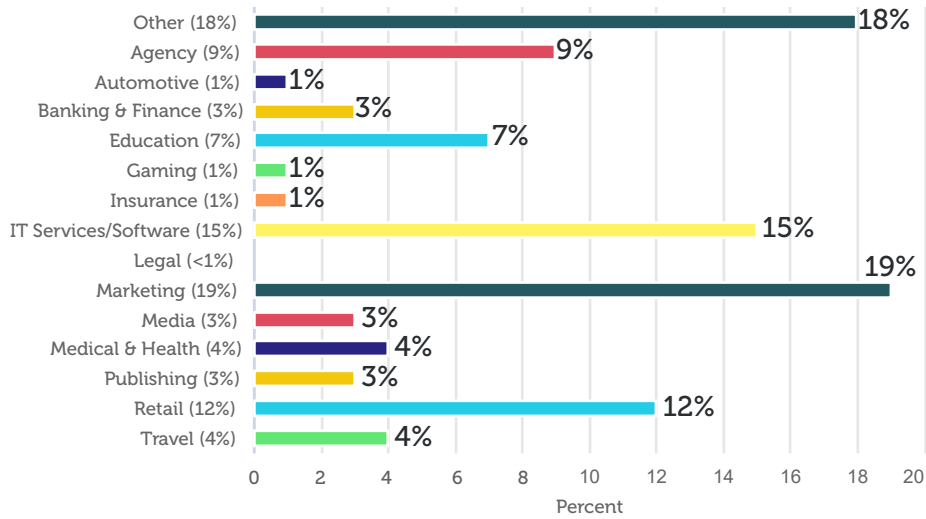


Fig. 5 - 6-10 automated programs per industry

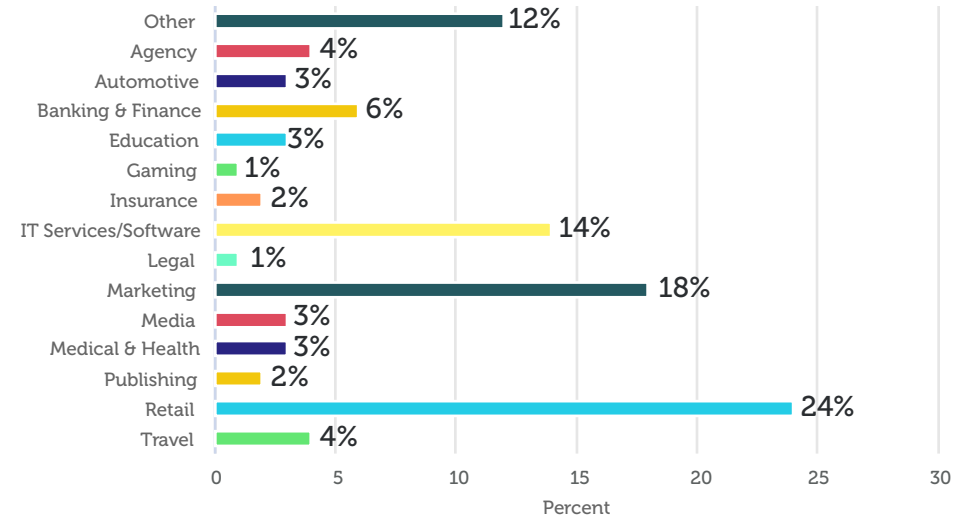


Fig. 6 - 11-20 automated programs per industry

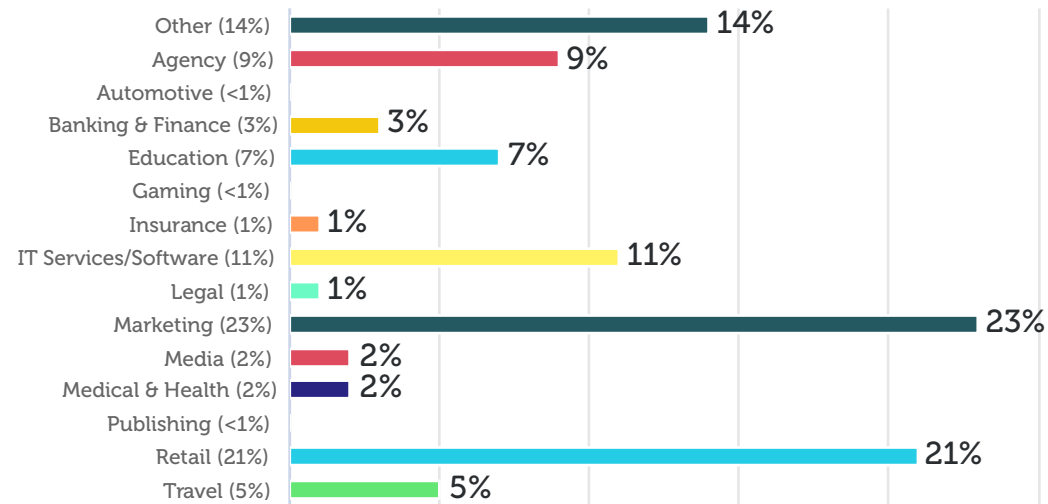
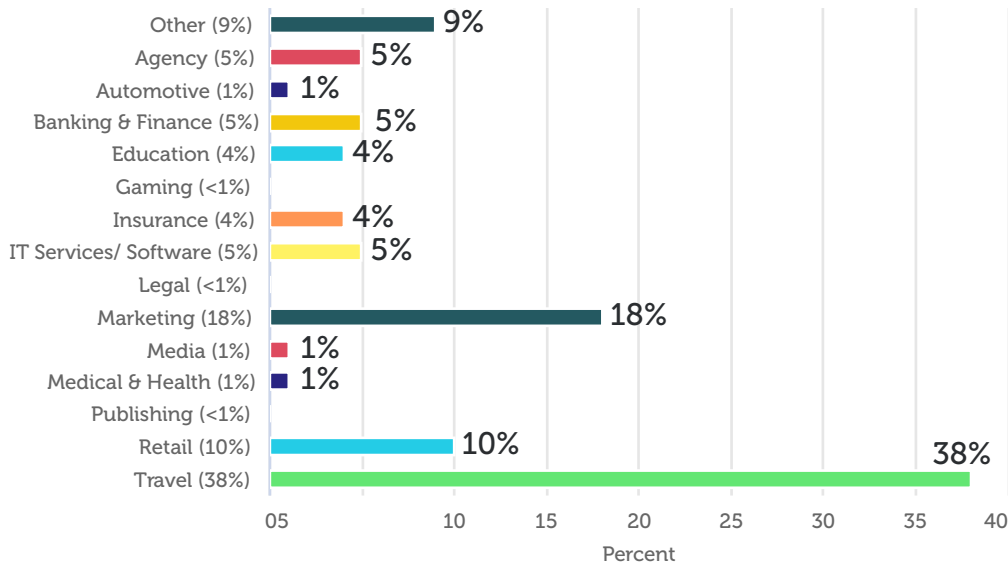


Fig. 7 - 21-40 automated programs per industry



Our take: It shouldn't be too surprising that IT and Marketing were most likely to see the value of automation, but we were surprised that the numbers for Retail and Travel peaked at lower adoption of automation.

That's because automation enables personalization for marketers. The more automations a marketer uses, the more the email messages can be tailored to individual recipients at their specific points on the customer journey, to be helpful in specific ways and to respond to individual needs.

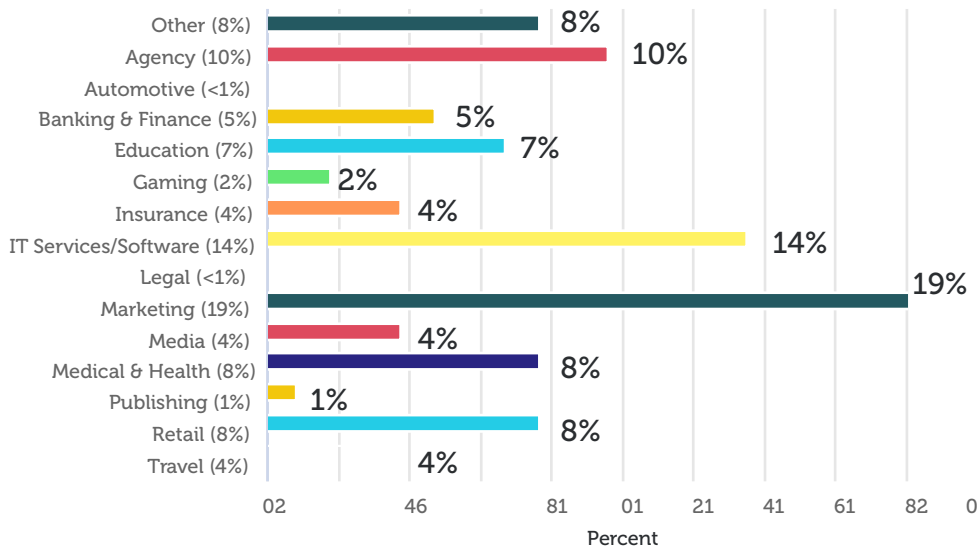
Majority of marketers follow a checklist every time they send an email campaign.

State of play with pre-deployment processes.

We asked respondents to answer this question: "Do you have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure that you rigidly adhere to for every email?"

More than half of respondents (52%) said they do follow this established procedure. We found this to be a surprisingly high percentage, given our experience working with clients and, in some cases, helping them develop a standard pre-deployment process to replace more haphazard procedures.

Fig. 8 - 41+ automated programs per industry



Our take: We worded that question specifically to distinguish between a mental checklist or a default list built within an email sending platform and an established process that requires accountability before sending or scheduling an email.

Many marketers keep a paper trail of checkpoints before an email goes out, possibly because a past error or a corporate culture based on checklists compelled the paper trail. In either case, a formal checklist should include all items that are critical to success, not just those intended to prevent errors.

This distinction implies that a step like checking for accessibility does not imply fixing an error. Rather, it's a process that validates the email will appeal to all audiences.

The sticking point for many marketers might have been the phrase "that you rigidly adhere to for every email. "Our follow-up question to the 48% of respondents who answered "No" asked, "Do you pre-deployment test every email that is sent?"

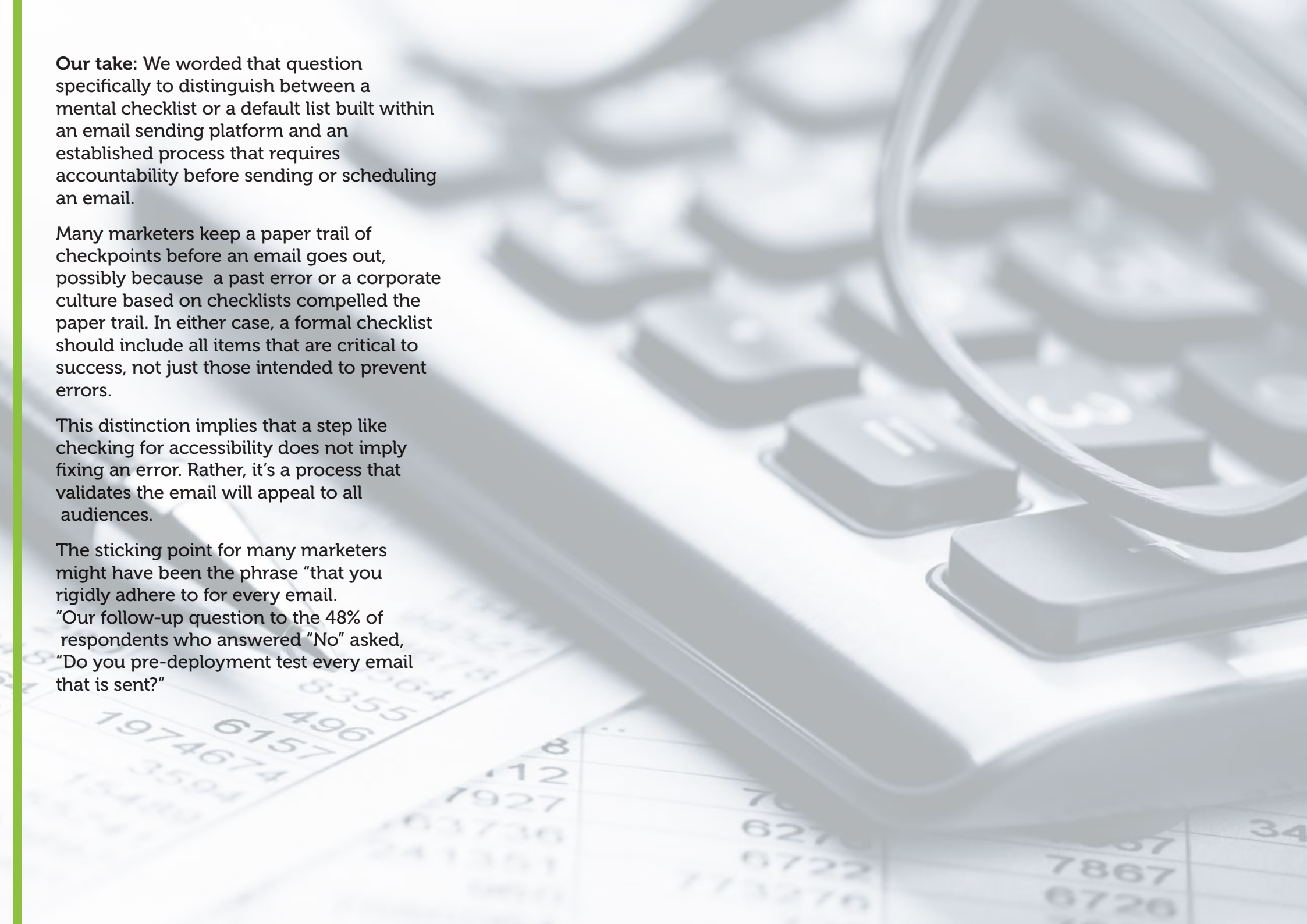


Fig. 10 - If you don't have a written pre-deployment checklist procedure, what type of emails do you test?

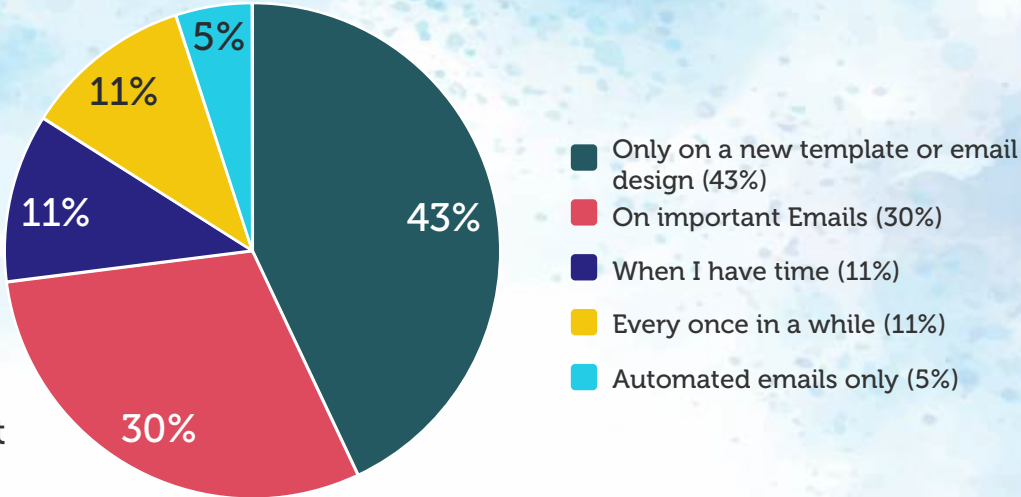
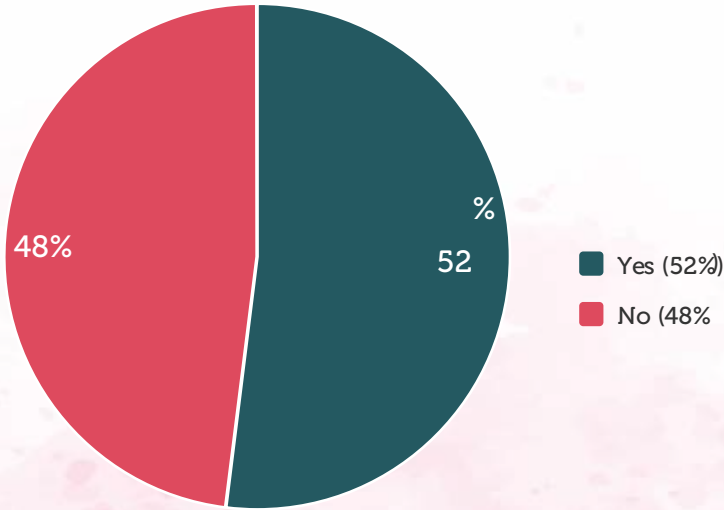
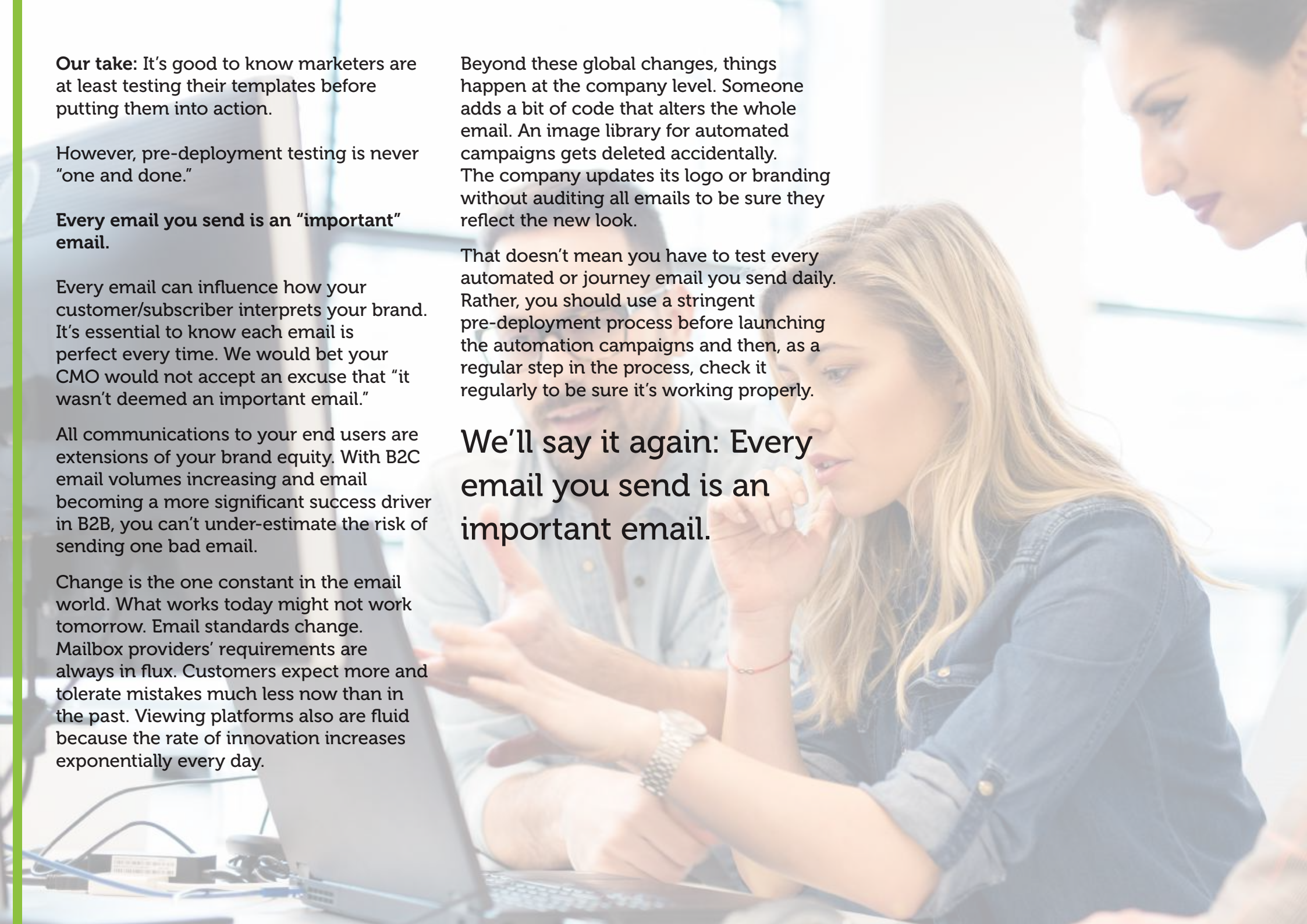


Fig. 9 - Do you have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure that you rigidly adhere to for every email?



Most respondents say they test either a new template (43%) or "important" emails (30%). Time is a factor for 22% of respondents, saying they test when they have time, or they test occasionally.



Our take: It's good to know marketers are at least testing their templates before putting them into action.

However, pre-deployment testing is never "one and done."

Every email you send is an "important" email.

Every email can influence how your customer/subscriber interprets your brand. It's essential to know each email is perfect every time. We would bet your CMO would not accept an excuse that "it wasn't deemed an important email."

All communications to your end users are extensions of your brand equity. With B2C email volumes increasing and email becoming a more significant success driver in B2B, you can't under-estimate the risk of sending one bad email.

Change is the one constant in the email world. What works today might not work tomorrow. Email standards change. Mailbox providers' requirements are always in flux. Customers expect more and tolerate mistakes much less now than in the past. Viewing platforms also are fluid because the rate of innovation increases exponentially every day.

Beyond these global changes, things happen at the company level. Someone adds a bit of code that alters the whole email. An image library for automated campaigns gets deleted accidentally. The company updates its logo or branding without auditing all emails to be sure they reflect the new look.

That doesn't mean you have to test every automated or journey email you send daily. Rather, you should use a stringent pre-deployment process before launching the automation campaigns and then, as a regular step in the process, check it regularly to be sure it's working properly.

We'll say it again: Every email you send is an important email.

Pre-deployment: Most campaigns take 1-2 weeks to develop.

"Email is easy!"

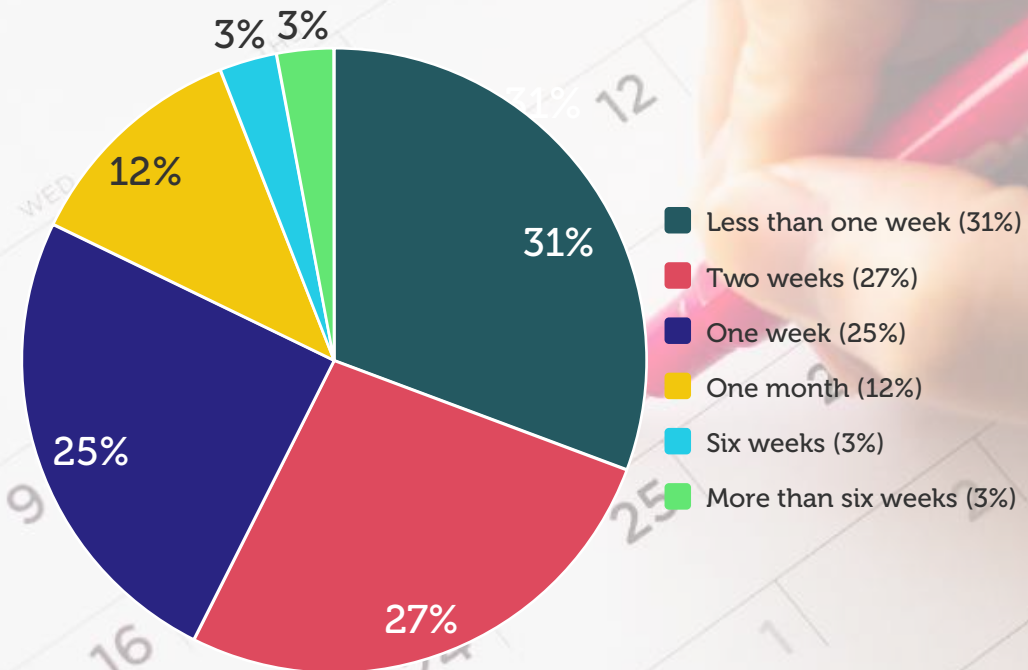
We've all heard executives and non-email people say that. They're not necessarily being malicious or snide. Rather, they just don't understand all the work that goes into a business-as-usual (BAU) email campaign. And, maybe, we email and CRM marketers make it look easy.

They might think we upload the creative into something as easy as Outlook and hit "Send" because they don't see - or we don't show - all the thinking that goes into each campaign.

Our study shows that the process does take time. Although the largest single group of respondents (31%) said they can turn out a campaign in less than a week, 52% said it takes one to two weeks, not including approvals.

Our take: These findings illustrate clearly the breadth and depth of the work that goes into each BAU campaign. Through

Fig. 11 - How long is your full pre-deployment process for BAU campaigns?



this study, as we talk about the pre-deployment process, we will find even more depth than most people understand. With that many campaigns taking more than a week to develop, it presents two realities:

- Those who turn out campaigns in a week or less are hustling to get campaigns out the door, often daily or several times a week. They're under the gun to produce, and that can introduce mistakes into the process. See Figures 29-30 below on mistakes by frequency of sending.

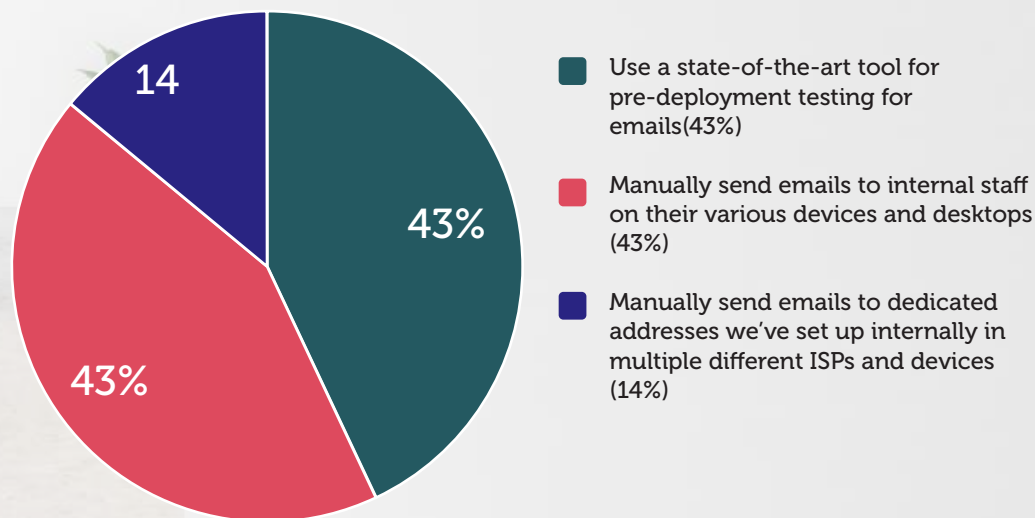
- Having more time does not guarantee fewer mistakes. When a process takes more than a week, it can introduce the chance to have things overlooked, especially if multiple people are involved or there are more steps in the pre-deployment process. See Figures 37-41 later in this report.

Email perfection takes time and requires a methodical approach. Try not to worry about the time it takes to polish an email. If done right, you will most certainly see returns from the time spent.

Pre-deployment: Most marketers test manually

Manual testing predominates over automated pre-deployment tools for marketers - not an unexpected finding. Respondents were tied between manual testing using staff browsers and devices and using a state-of-the-art pre-deployment tool (43% each). However, adding in testing by sending to external addresses tipped the balance to manual processes.

Fig. 12 - What is your current process for pre-deployment testing?



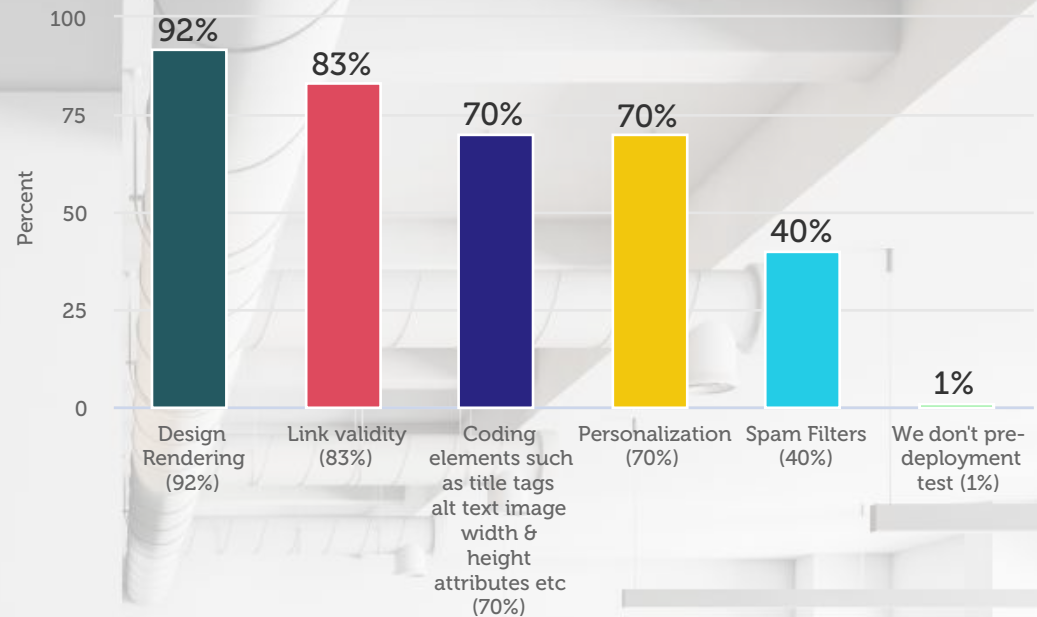
Our take: Email moves fast. Most email teams we've worked with don't have a pre-deployment process. Those that do know their companies and skill sets. They've made mistakes and have created something to control that process, like a checklist.

Creating a pre-deployment process is certainly a significant step toward reducing campaign mistakes. However, we're concerned about marketers who rely on sending emails to staff email addresses and devices or to external addresses, like a seed list.

Results are not universal. All you prove with this method is that your email looks good on those devices at those addresses. But, your recipients are using dozens of other email clients on Apple and Android phones, on tablets, desktops, screen readers and watches. It's impossible to test for all of these environments manually.

Most marketers test only the operating system, not the phones or other devices. Everybody has a different phone, but people assume if it looks good on their Android phone it looks good on all of them, and that's not necessarily the case.

Fig. 13 - What elements of the email do you pre-deployment test?



Further, that's just testing on how the email looks. Think about accessibility, spelling errors - everything a pre-deployment process has. Its breadth and depth make sure your email is interpreted as intended, regardless of the medium used to engage with the email.

False positive with deliverability testing. Using a seed list to test for deliverability has its own issues with accuracy. Much of deliverability testing relies on the personal experience in the inbox: how often you open, click and engage with an email.

If you use the same seed list and inbox every time and open the email every time, Gmail will think you are really engaged with the sender. So, it won't put your emails in the spam folder unless others have en masse.

Mistakes will happen if you don't follow a pre-deployment process, whether it's a mental list, a checklist maintained in a project-management system like Trello, Basecamp or Asana, or an automated pre-deployment tool.

Pre-deployment:

Design rendering, link validity are top elements tested. Only 1% of survey respondents said they don't test email at all before sending.

But what are marketers most likely to test? The easy things, like design rendering (92%) and link validity (83%). Other elements tested are coding elements (70%), personalization (69%) and spam filters 40%.

Our take: An earlier result shows 48% of respondents don't test every email during the pre-deployment process.

This might be the email industry's fault, in part, because an early best practice held that only the template needed to be tested. Then the narrative shifted to "stress testing" to be sure the email looked good in all email clients for all emails.

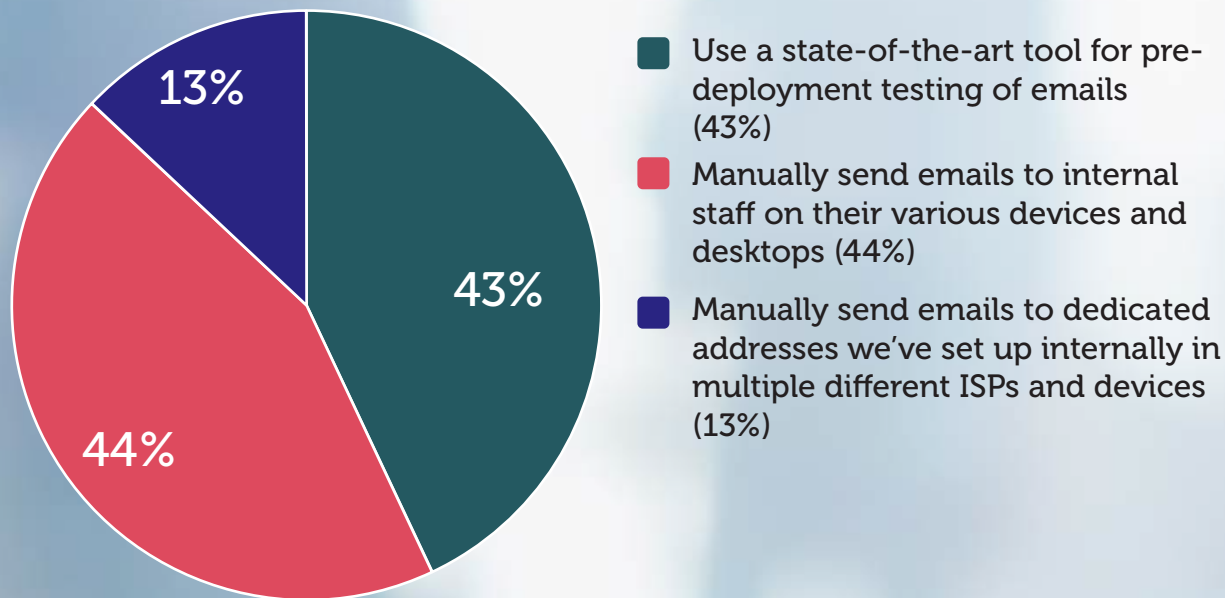
Design rendering is not the most important thing in email. Yes, it's important because if it doesn't look good, especially on mobile devices, people won't read it.

They might even unsubscribe or report the email as spam. But marketers learned that other factors needed to be considered.

As a result, the narrative shifted again, this time emphasizing that every email needed to be tested before deployment. It expanded beyond template review to include the fluid and rapid nature of campaign creation and the propensity for mistakes during the production process.

As easy and popular as design rendering tests are, the other elements also are important, such as validating links/offers, coding elements, personalization and spam filters. A pre-deployment process that doesn't build in time to test these elements will set up your email for failure.

Fig. 14 - Current process - Team of 1



Pre-deployment: Teams of all sizes rely on manual processes

We expected to see smaller teams rely on informal pre-deployment processes such as sending emails to internal addresses or to seed lists. What we learned: Larger teams also are far more informal in their pre-deployment testing.

Current process and team size:

Fig. 16 - Current process - Team of 6-10

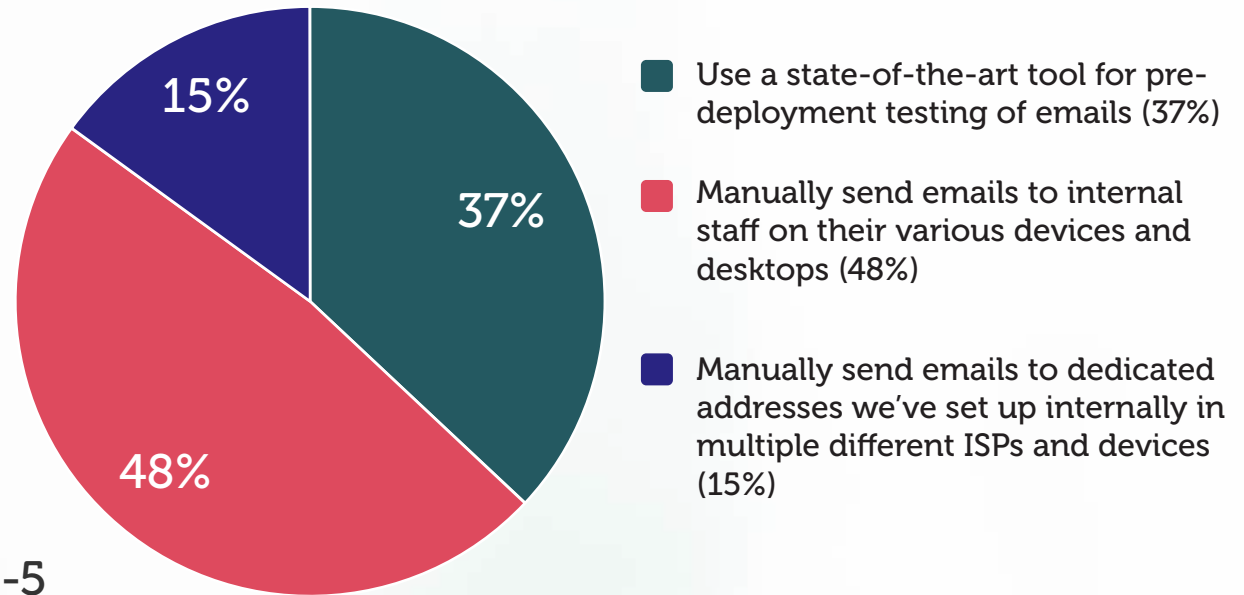


Fig. 15 - Current process - Team of 2-5

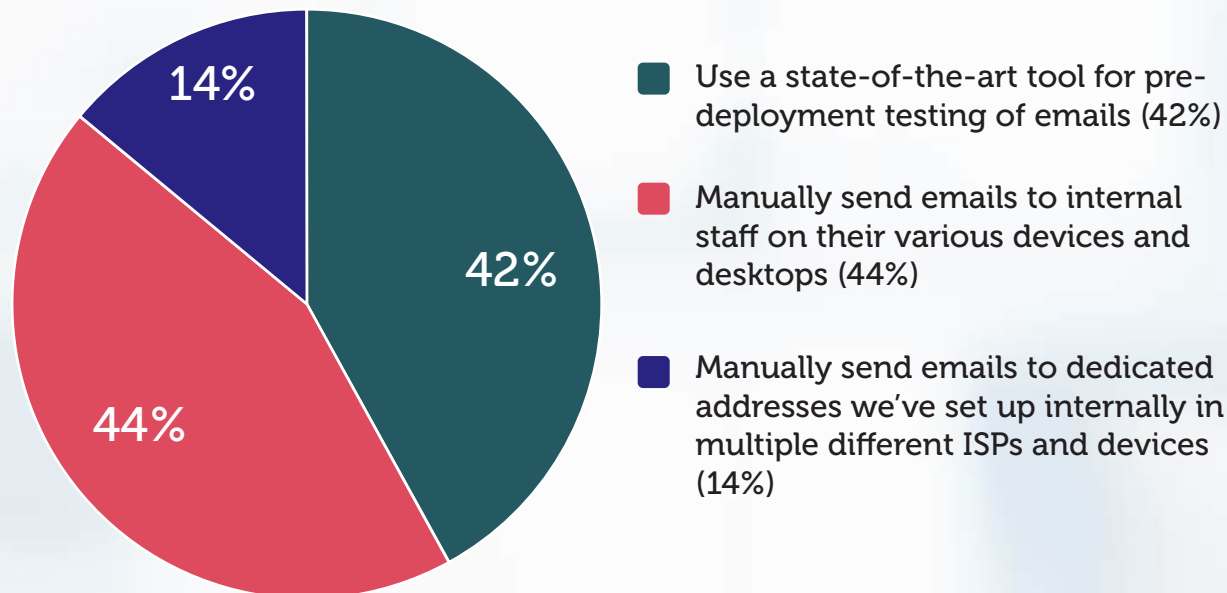


Fig. 17 - Current process - Team of 11-20

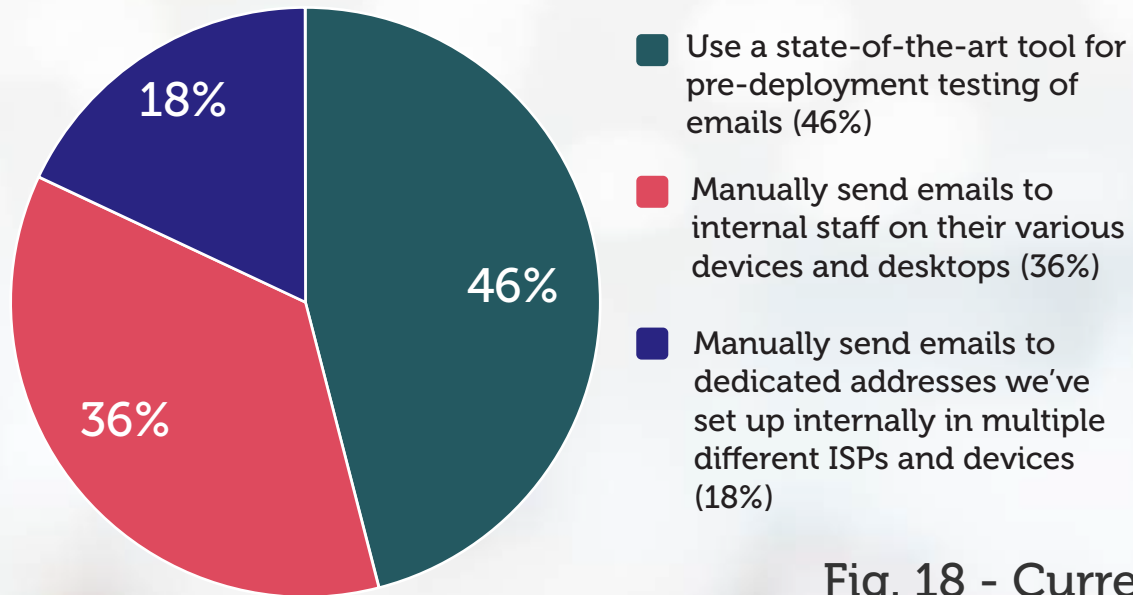
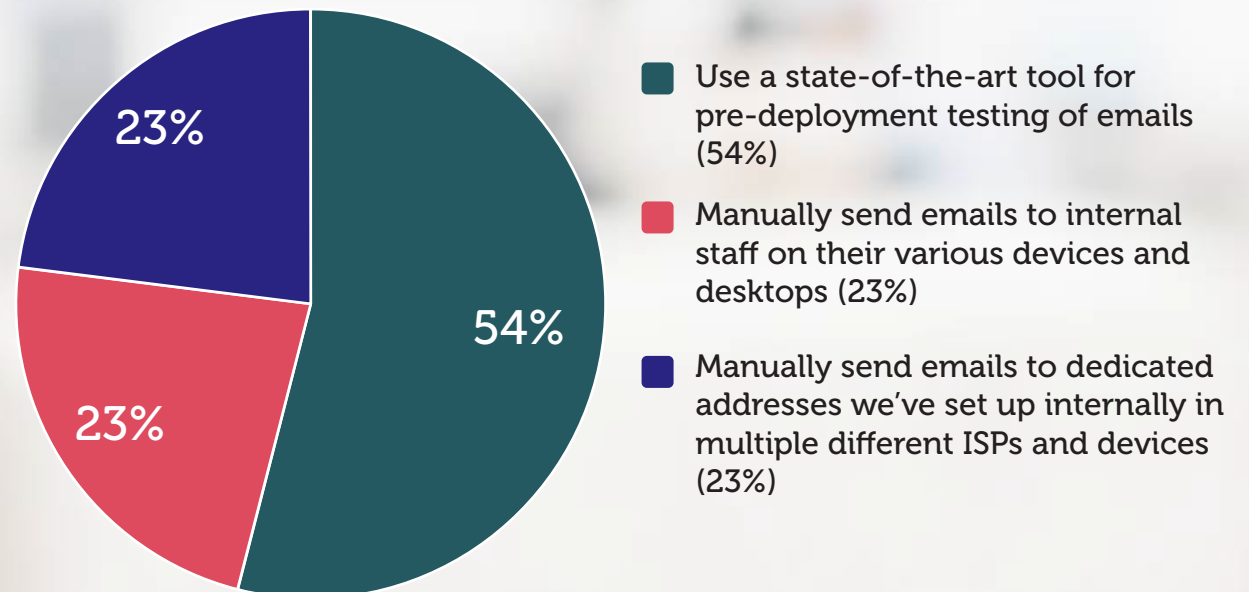
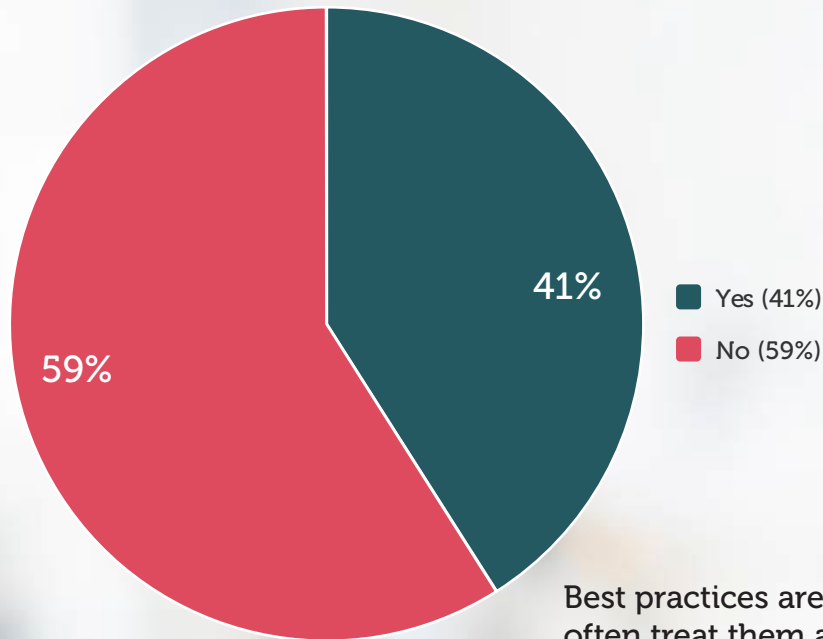


Fig. 18 - Current process - Team of 21+



By team size, do you have a pre-deployment checklist?

Fig. 19 - Have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure - Team of 1



Our take: We don't mean to imply that teams who rely on manual QA are not less concerned about the welfare of their emails than people who use an automated tool. Rather, it illustrates one of the problems with "best practices."

Best practices are evolving constantly, but we often treat them as if they were immutable and impervious to change. At the same time, we learn more every day about our email audiences, what works and what doesn't. Technology, too, is always coming up with new ways to do things better.

What was once a best practice, then, can quickly become outmoded when we acquire more resources to resolve pain points in the email creation and pre-deployment process.

Sending emails to internal addresses on different browsers and devices and using external seed lists was once a leading-edge best practice. But it has many limitations: It lacks accountability, such as not being able to move to the next stage until errors are fixed.

Reliability in detecting deliverability is another problem, as we discussed in the previous section. You could see artificially high inbox placement instead of actual placement rates.

Pre-deployment: Larger teams reply on checklists before sending campaigns

The bigger the email team, the more it depends on checklists to reduce errors before sending. When you have more people involved in the process, the more you need to safeguard against introducing errors, especially at later stages.

Fig. 20 - Have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure – Team of 2-5

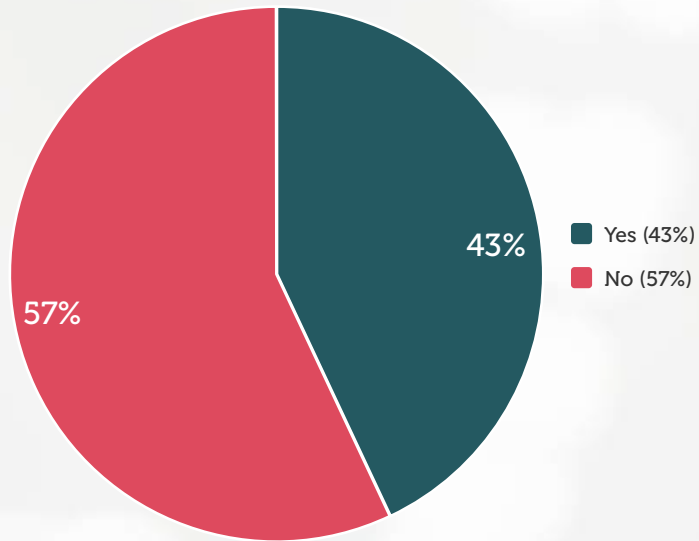


Fig. 21 - Have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure – Team of 6-10

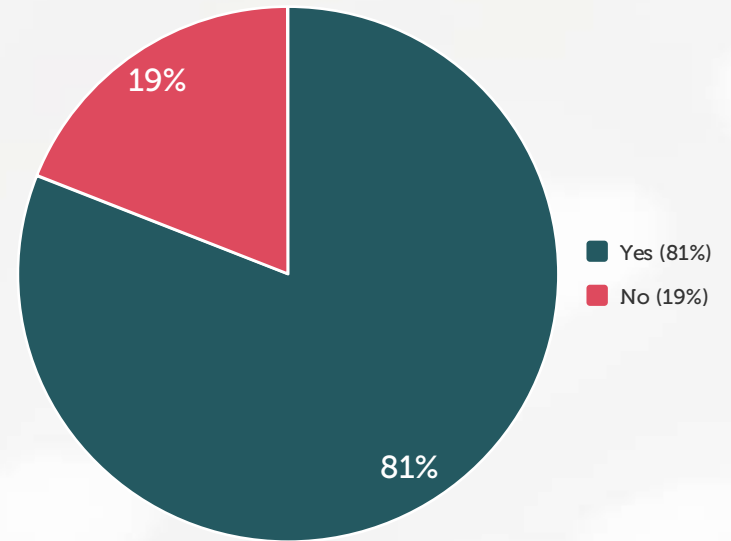


Fig. 22 - Have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure – Team of 11-20

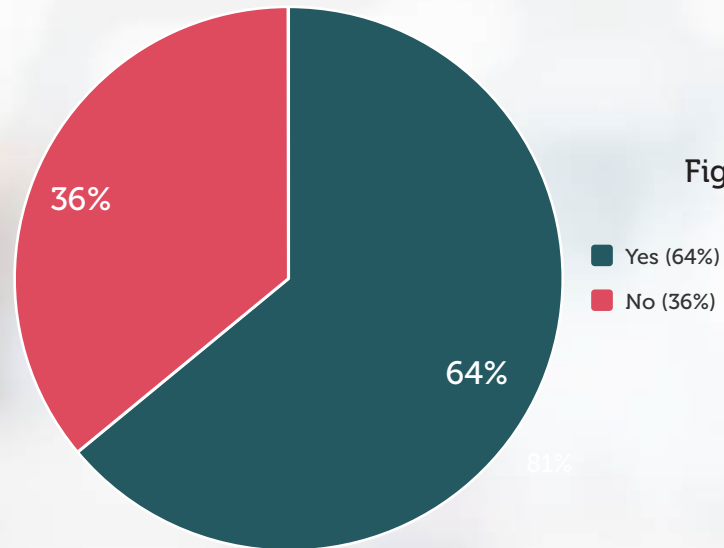


Fig. 21

Fig. 23 - Have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure – Teams of 21+

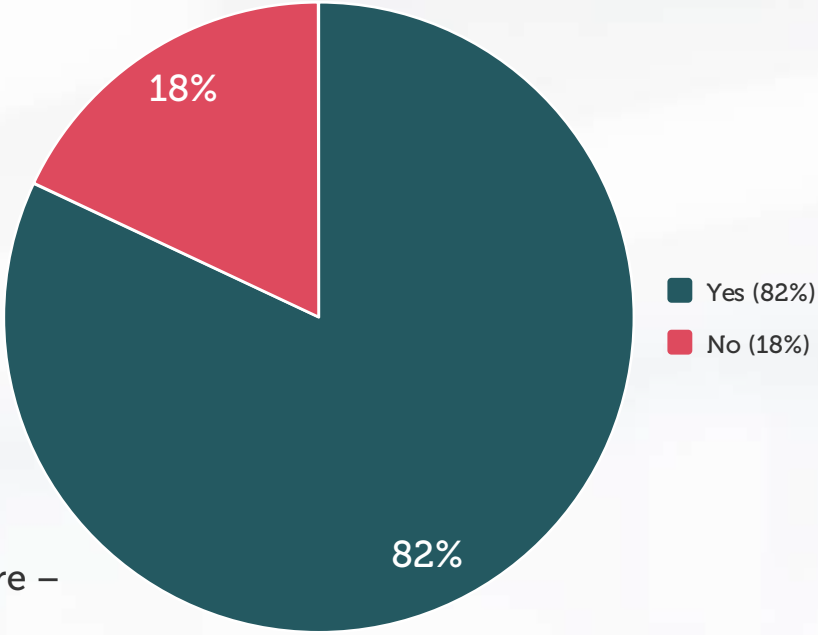
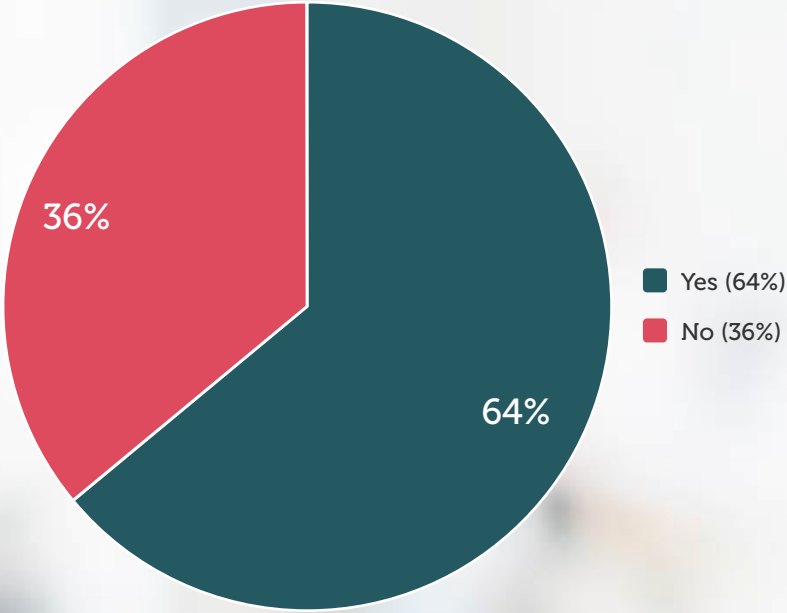


Fig. 22 - Have a written pre-deployment test checklist procedure – Team of 11-20



Our take: This becomes a bigger problem as your team increases in numbers.

If your small email team suddenly scales up to 10 or more people, how sure are you that something won't get overlooked in your pre-deployment process?

Smaller teams can learn from larger teams in that having a defined process is essential to sending accurate email. Larger teams have learned that mistakes happen, and accountability is essential. Hence, the checklist.

This study found the vast majority of single-person teams have no process. We've talked to and had experience with many marketers who have put in time on one-person departments, and we can't imagine not having a tool to provide that extra oversight for error-free email.

Single-person teams that do use a pre-deployment process tend to rely on tools to enable speed to market but also to make their jobs easier. If you're a single-person team, look to Software-as-a-Service tools to enable a greater velocity of innovation and to protect your work.

Most pre-deployment checklists are Excel sheets or paper lists that you can eyeball to make sure you didn't miss any steps. Email on Acid has one that you can download for free and customize to meet the needs of your team and your subscribers.

Note: Any checklist needs to be customized based on your team, audience, and use. Also, consider the dichotomy of your subscriber base in terms of demographics, email experience, age and other factors.

"Email marketers are time poor. Creating an email campaign involves multiple steps before deployment. Late approvals and last-minute changes add pressure - corners are cut, train wrecks happen. Using a tool to automate and ensure quality pre-deployment is a no brainer."

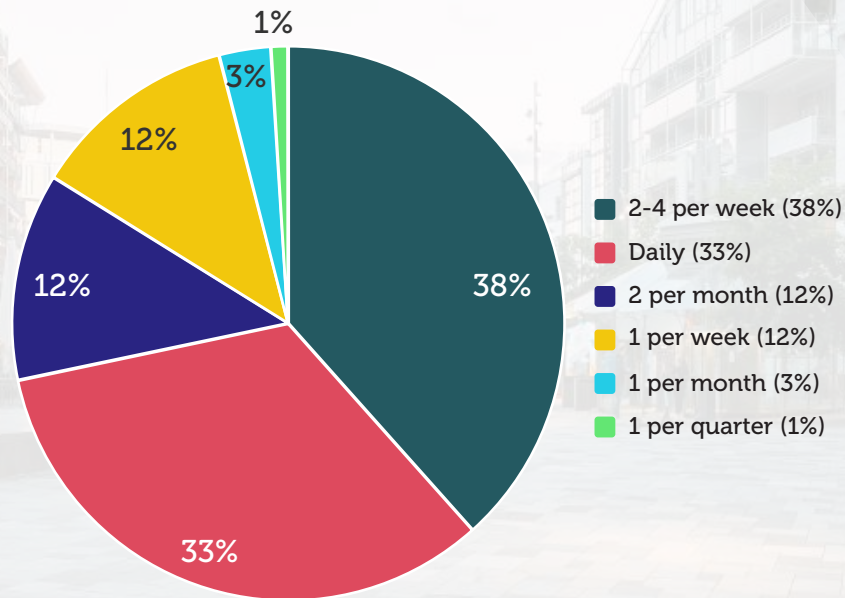
Tim Watson
Founder, Zettasphere

State of play with frequency

Frequency and process: Manual pre-deployment processes prevail, although frequent senders are more likely to use pre-deployment tools

Respondents in our survey are frequent senders, either two to four times a week (38%) or daily (33%), comprising 71% of the total. When we investigate how respondents of different frequencies manage the pre-deployment process, we find that those who send more often are more likely to use tools than less-frequent senders. However, we also find that manual send processes are still more prevalent, even among heavy email users, than using a tool.

Fig. 24 - How frequently do you send emails?



What is your pre-deployment procedure based upon how often you send?

Fig. 25 - Based on using a state-of-the-art tool, what is your sending frequency?

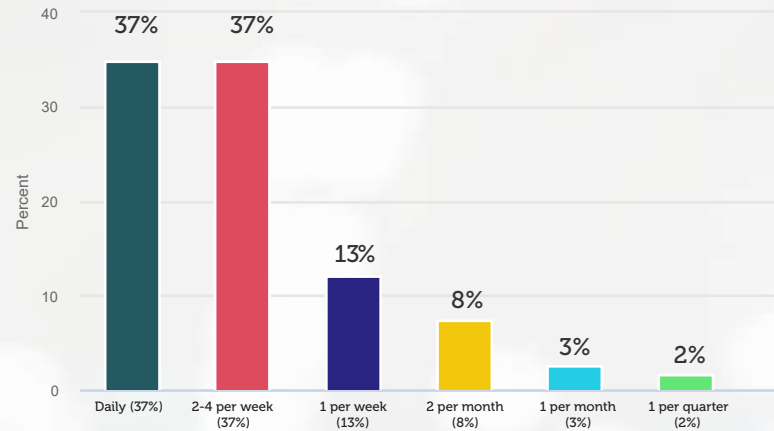


Fig. 26 - Based on manually sending emails to internal staff on their various devices, what is your sending frequency?

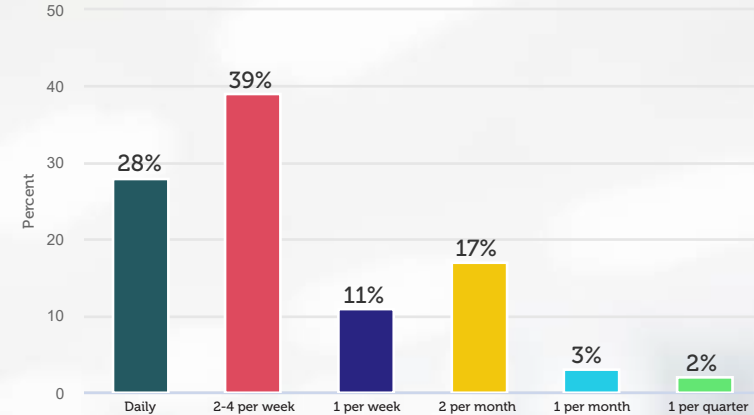
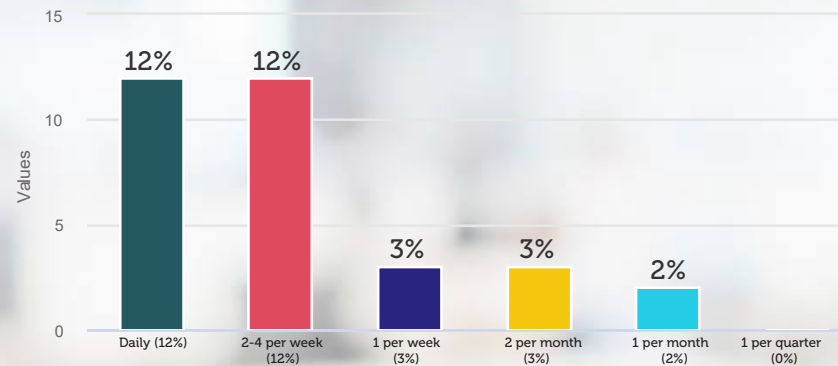


Fig. 27 - Based on manually sending emails to dedicated addresses set up internally in different ISPs and devices, what is your sending frequency?



Our take: Mistakes happen. It seems odd to us that marketers aren't utilizing tools to improve pre-deployment efficiencies and to reduce mistakes in their campaigns. SaaS-based pre-deployment platforms are intended to make people's lives easier. Yet, we still see people are not using these tools to avoid damage-inducing errors.

Most email marketers who use manual methods will take a moment before they hit "Send" to run through a mental checklist. Even after they've checked off every step, they'll worry if there's still a mistake in there somewhere.

This image from Mailchimp's sending process illustrates the moment:

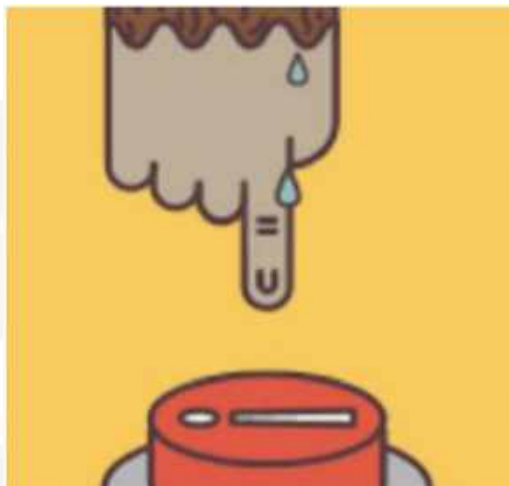


Image via Mailchimp

Because that fear is so pervasive, it's surprising that more marketers don't leverage the innovative technologies designed specifically to take the fear out of that action.

Some email sending platforms provide basic fail-safe steps that check for common errors such as missing fields like subject and preheader text. However, they won't know if the email complies with accessibility laws, includes a link listed on a domain blacklist, or uses animated GIFs that are set up correctly for email clients that don't support the animation.

The 37% of respondents who test every email seems low. In a world where email marketing delivers the highest return on the marketing investment, marketers should do everything possible to protect that investment and avoid uncomfortable conversations with their executive team when a preventable gaffe was sent.



What's the cost of not testing every email?

We all know that mistakes can be expensive, but what is the real cost? We rarely think about it until it happens, and then it's an exercise that we should have talked about before the incident.

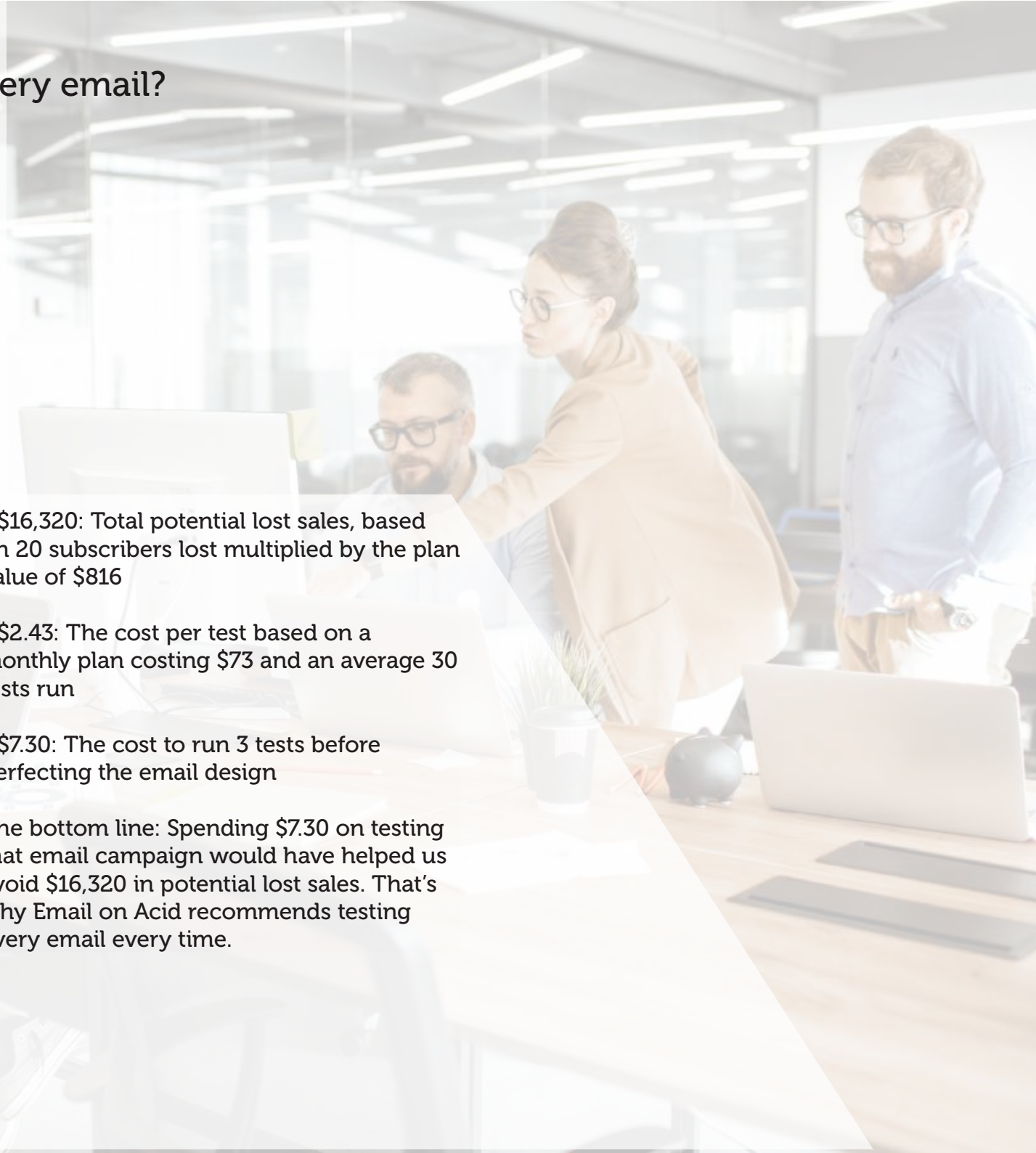
Email on Acid set up a fictional campaign, based on realistic numbers, to learn the cost of not testing that campaign and discovering it didn't display correctly in Outlook.

Here's what our calculator showed us:

- 30,000: Subscribers in the segment we emailed with our campaign to promote a plan valued at \$816
- 7,500: Subscribers who opened the email (a 25% open rate)
- 375: Subscribers who use Outlook and didn't see the email display correctly
- 64: Outlook users who opened the email (17% click-to-open rate)
- 20: Subscribers lost, based on a conversion rate of 30%

- \$16,320: Total potential lost sales, based on 20 subscribers lost multiplied by the plan value of \$816
- \$2.43: The cost per test based on a monthly plan costing \$73 and an average 30 tests run
- \$7.30: The cost to run 3 tests before perfecting the email design

The bottom line: Spending \$7.30 on testing that email campaign would have helped us avoid \$16,320 in potential lost sales. That's why Email on Acid recommends testing every email every time.



State of play with mistakes

Mistakes: 4 in 10 marketers say they never send emails with mistakes.

We found that 40% of all respondents said they did not send out any emails containing mistakes in the last year, while 28% owned up to sending one to five mistake emails.

Our take: How do you know those emails went out without mistakes?

If someone from your C-suite isn't going over your emails with a magnifying glass, or if you don't get complaints from subscribers or alerts from your customer service team, are you certain your emails are going out without mistakes?

You might not hear about them, but if you have a high number of bounces on your website, especially right after you send a campaign, that can indicate something is seriously wrong. Check your campaign send times against website bounces, spam complaints and unsubscribes, and then investigate anything that looks out of order.

Your average customers aren't likely to come back and say your email was wrongly formatted if things end up out of place. They don't notice mistakes that don't affect them. However, formatting and other problems can reduce your deliverability.

Fig. 28 - How many "mistake emails" have you sent in the last 12 months?

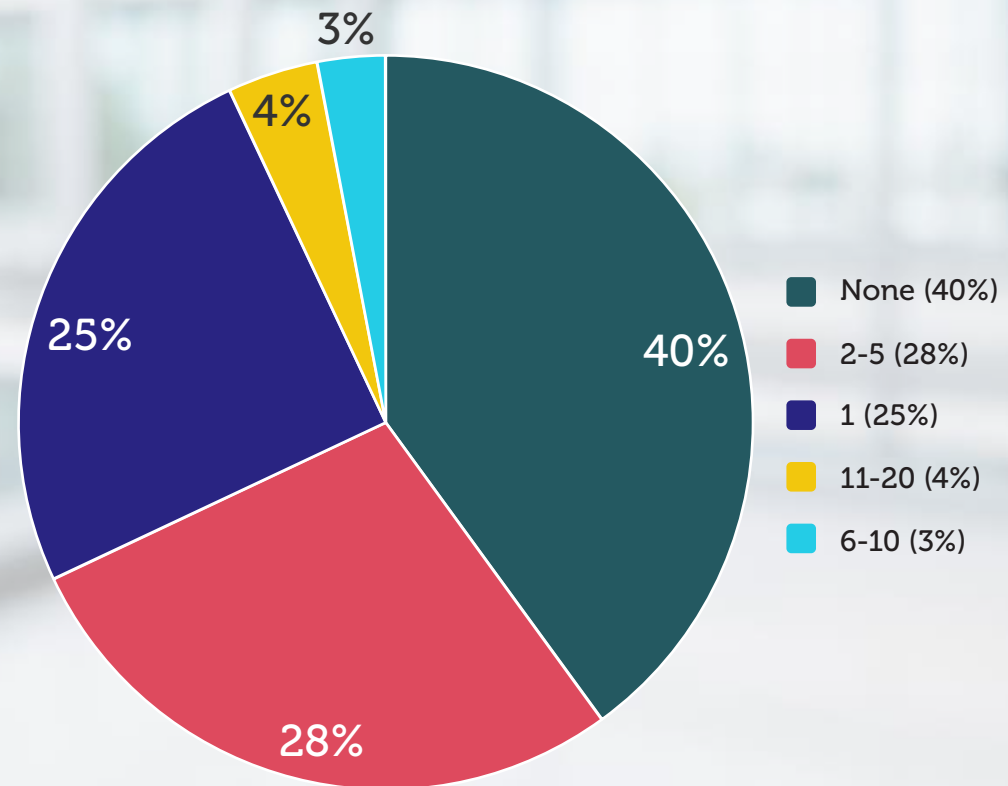
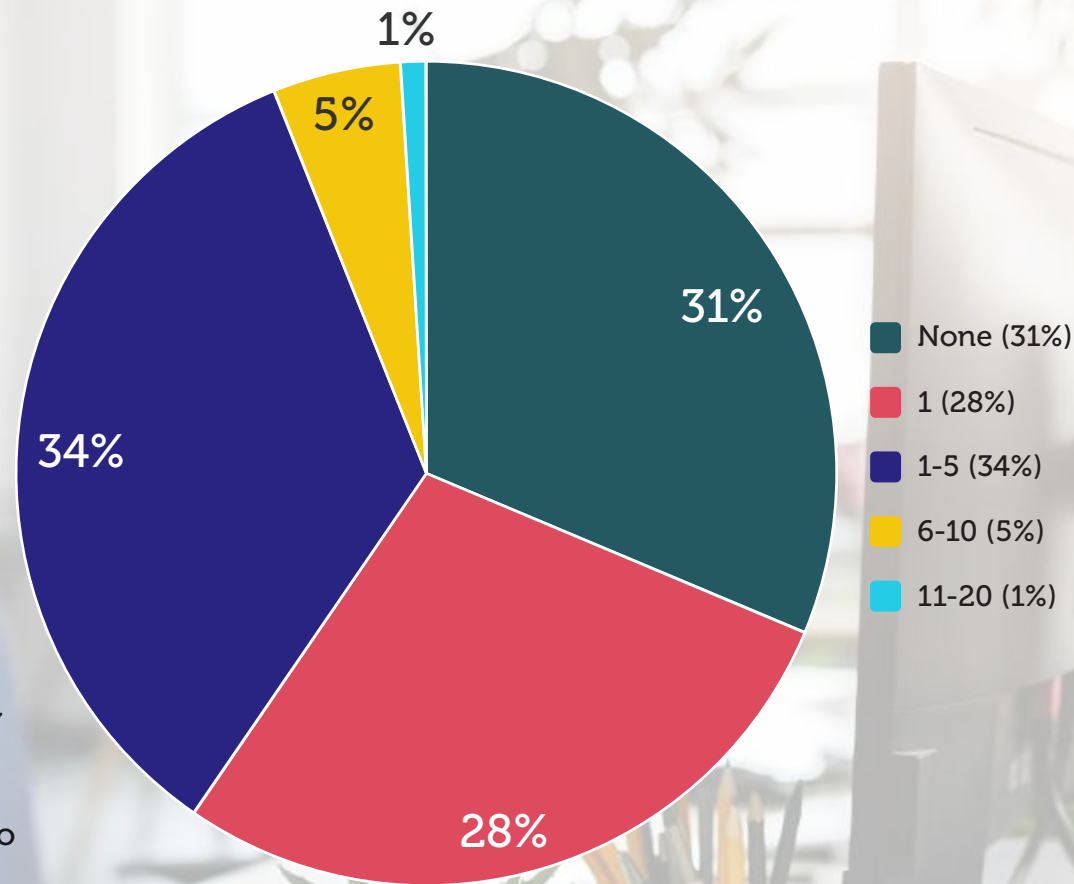


Fig. 29 - Number of mistakes made when sending daily

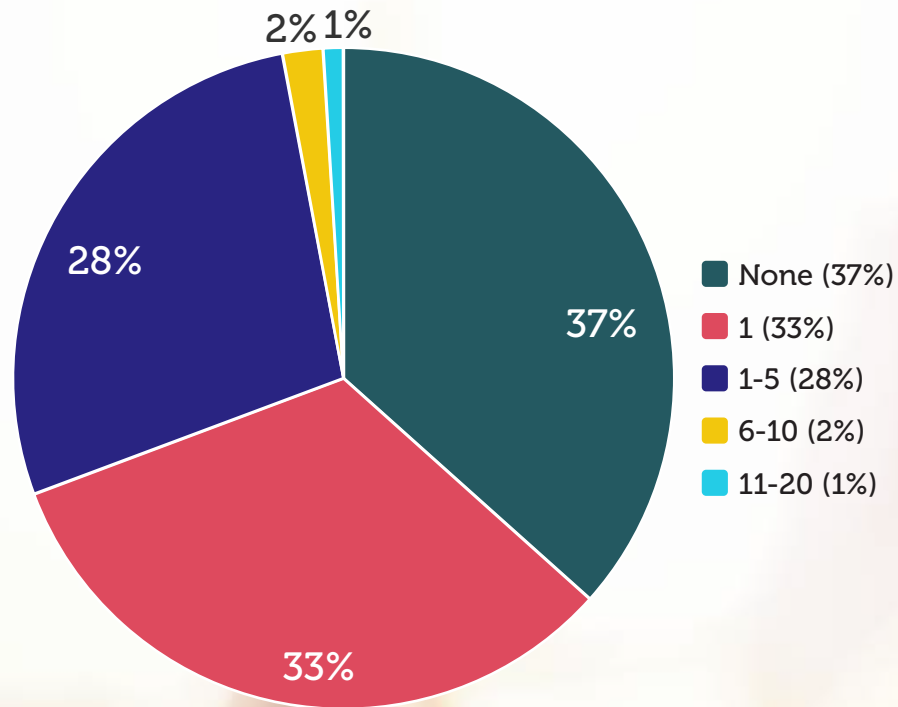


Mistakes: Frequent senders are more likely to send mistakes in emails

At 31%, daily senders were the least likely to report not making mistakes that were serious enough to warrant sending a correction email, while 34% owned up to making two to five messages and 28% said they made one mistake. Accuracy claims went up as frequency went down.

Number of mistakes made by sending frequency

Fig. 30 - Number of mistakes made when sending 2-4 times per week



Larger teams can be more at risk for overlooking or adding errors in the pre-deployment process.

Here, we see how this shakes out by looking at just two subsets of mistake data when viewed by frequency. Once again, we suggest that email teams who are under the greatest pressure to get campaigns out the door would get the greatest benefit from adding a pre-deployment tool to improve accuracy.

Our take: Yes, it's obvious that mistakes go up as frequency goes up, but we are compelled to point that out. It stands to reason, especially as we noted previously, that frequent senders are hustling to get campaigns ready to send or schedule.

Mistakes: As team size increases, so does confidence that emails are error-free

Our respondents are - overall - a confident group! Teams in most size classifications said they send emails with no errors or with only one. One notable exception is medium-size teams (6-10 members), who admitted to sending the largest percentage of errors. Nearly a quarter said they sent 11 to 20 errors.

Our take: Although the majority of teams with 6-10 members said they send emails with no errors or only one, the total (59%) was significantly lower than the majorities for the other teams. This group also had the highest number of respondents admitting to sending emails with the highest number of errors.

What's going on here? One possibility is that there might be less accountability on a team with many members.

Considering that a majority of all email teams use manual methods to check for errors rather than an automated tool, the possibility exists that team members are siloed in their own tasks that they aren't looking at the final product.

Even if one person on the team is charged with proofreading, link-checking, matching images, copy and CTAs to the email creative brief, errors can easily slip through without a fresh pair of eyes to give the email a once-over before sending.

Also, errors can be introduced late in the process if an image or CTA is changed without a final review against the checklist or creative brief.

In any case, teams that rely on manual processes must work even harder to make sure there's a procedure to detect and correct these late-stage errors. This adds yet another step to the manual pre-deployment process and another delay before launch.

Fig. 31 - Team size to number of mistakes made - Team of 1

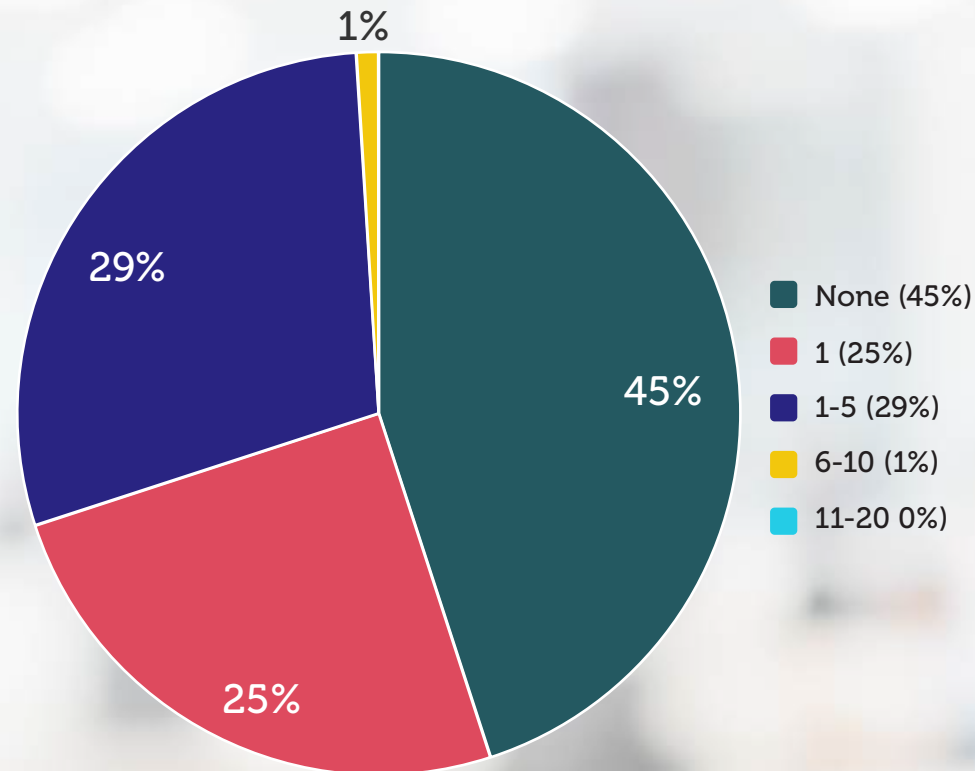


Fig. 32 - Team size to number of mistakes made - Team of 2-5

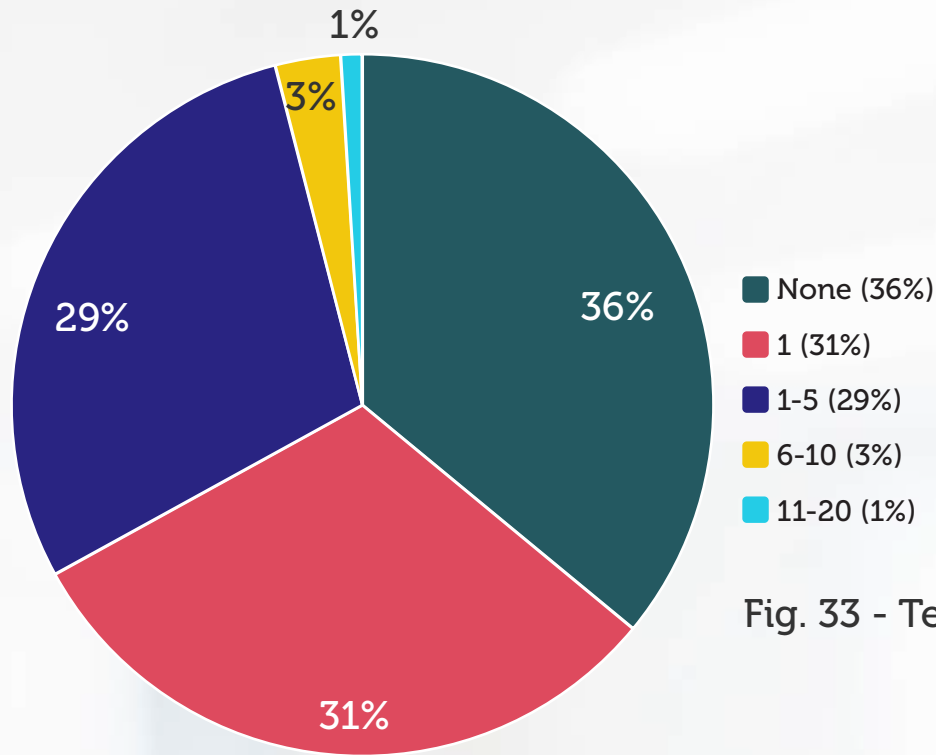


Fig. 33 - Team size to number of mistakes made - Team of 6-10

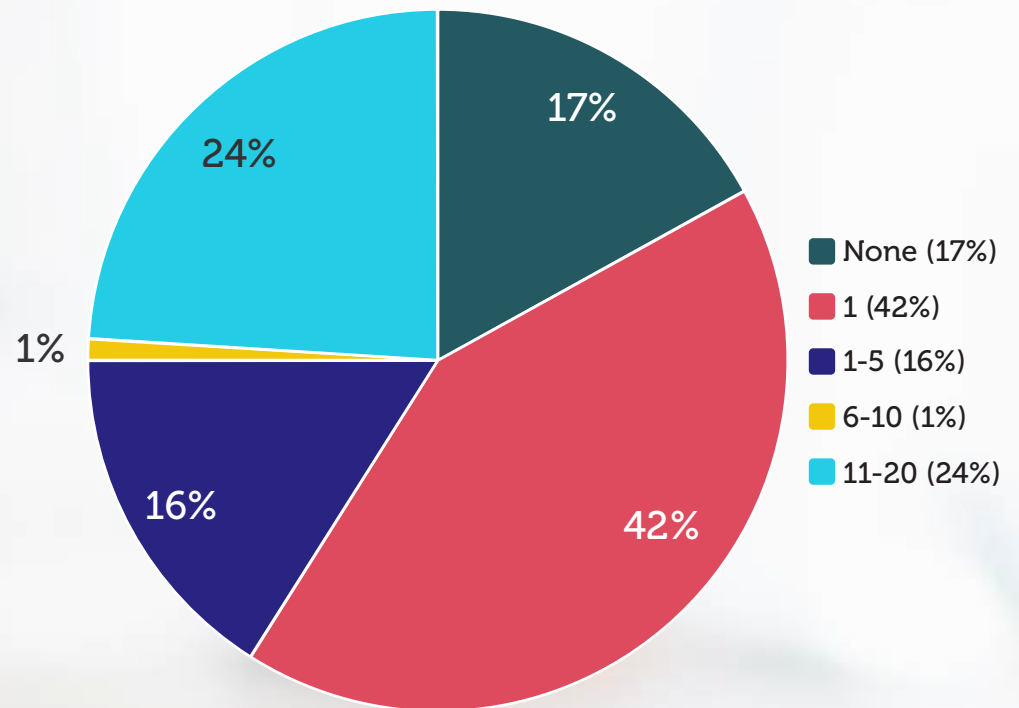


Fig. 35 - Team size to number of mistakes made - Team of 21+

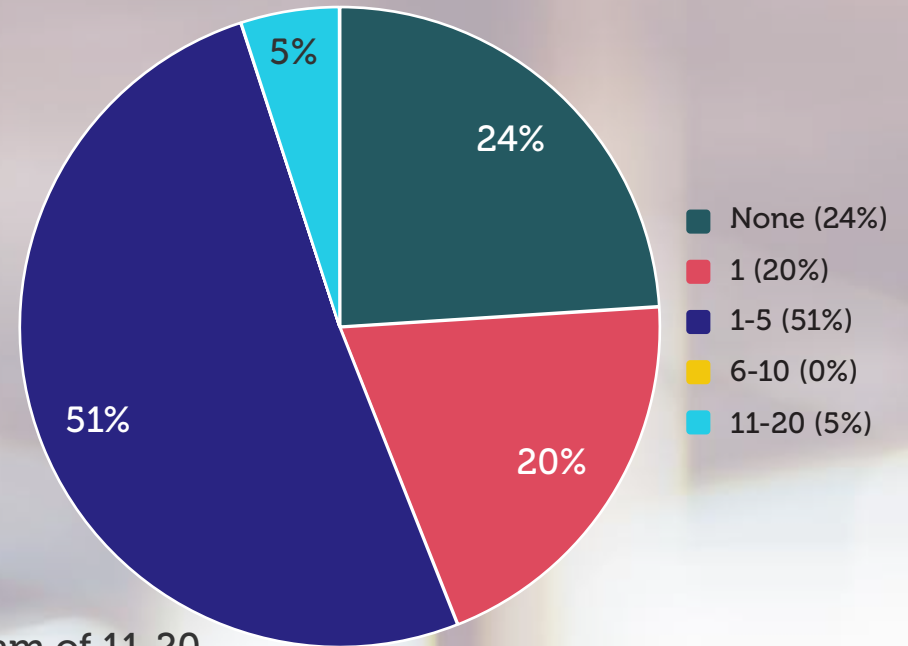
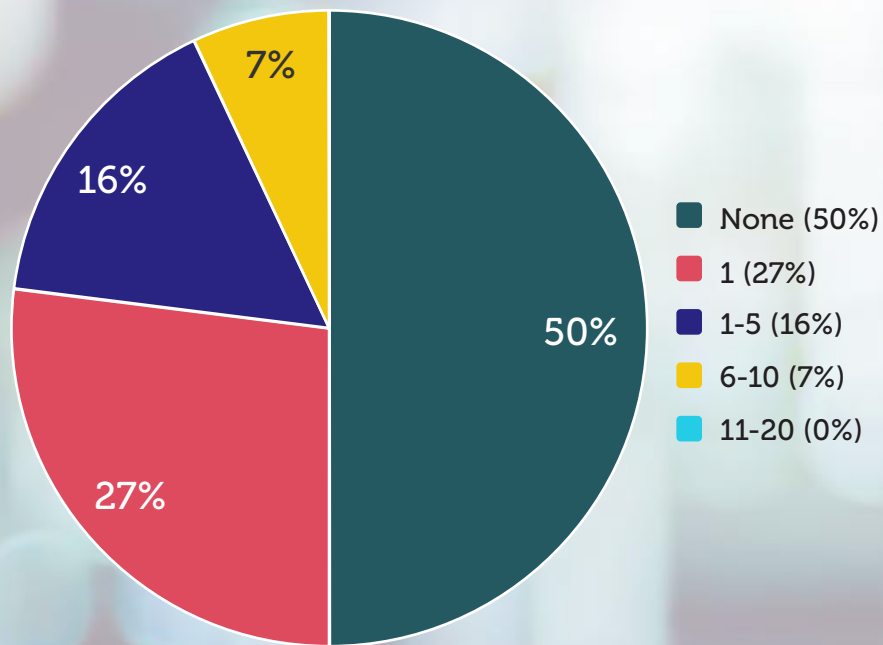


Fig. 34 - Team size to number of mistakes made - Team of 11-20



Mistakes: Copy errors, wrong links/CTA and wrong audience are most common errors

More than half of respondents said they've sent emails with copy errors, such as spelling mistakes or missing words, followed by wrong links or CTAs, sending to the wrong segments or audience, design or coding errors and incorrect personalization as the other leading mistakes in emails.

Our take: These results show how important a checklist is to track down errors before sending.

A checklist is essential because it ensures time is taken to review everything. We tend to be on a conveyor belt of production, especially on more frequent sends.

It's not enough, for example, to just use the link checker built into an email platform to verify the link is valid. We need to show that each link goes where it's supposed to go.

Copy errors, which top the list for our respondents, should be some of the easiest errors to fix, and not just because copy should go through multiple spell-checks and proofreaders. Copy is ripe for errors, especially on large teams with many people having access to the email in its creative stage.

A pre-deployment process that checks for copy errors and limits access to creative content can reduce the number of errors added in after a copywriter or proofreader signs off.

Mistakes: Errors increase when pre-deployment testing isn't done on every email.

When we looked at those who don't pre-deploy testing, across all team sizes, 61% of respondents that did not test every email have made a mistake, while 25% make between 2-5 mistakes.

Fig. 36 - What are the mistakes that you most commonly have made in the past?

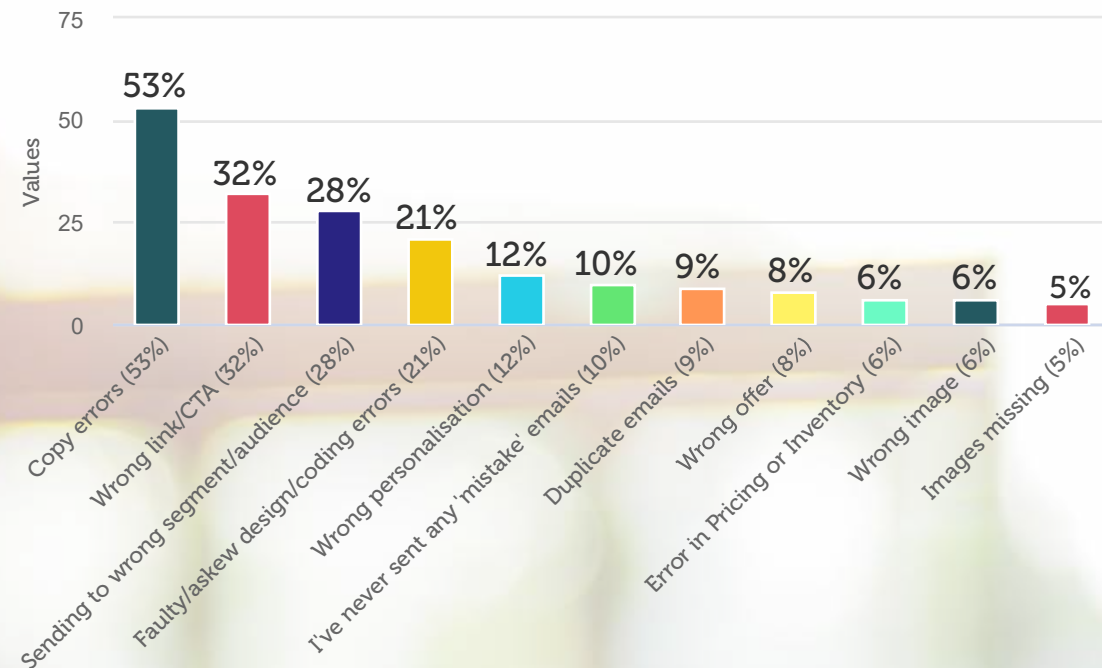
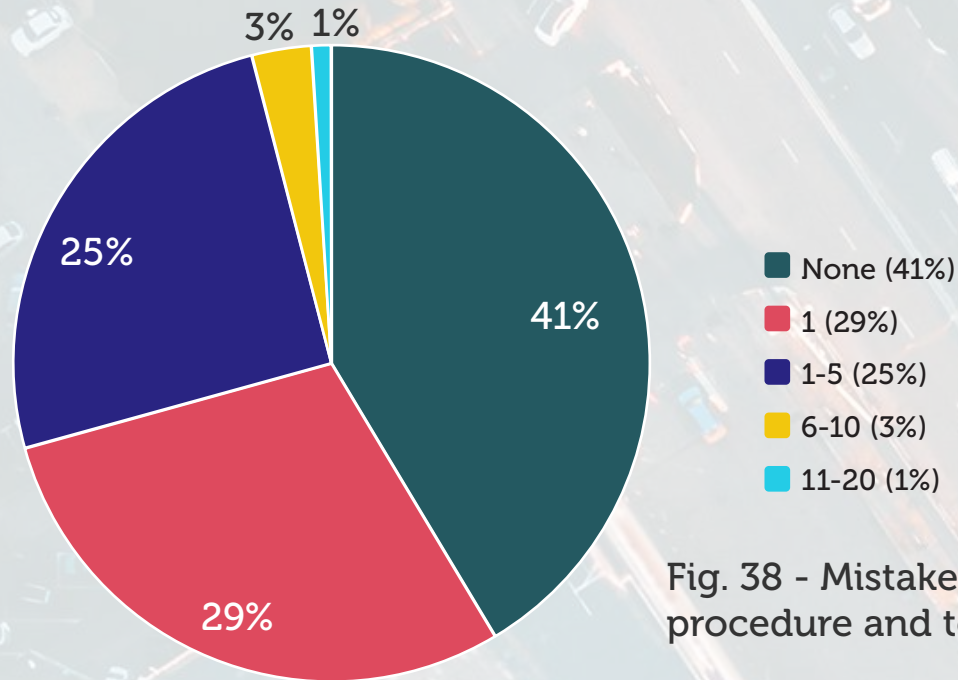


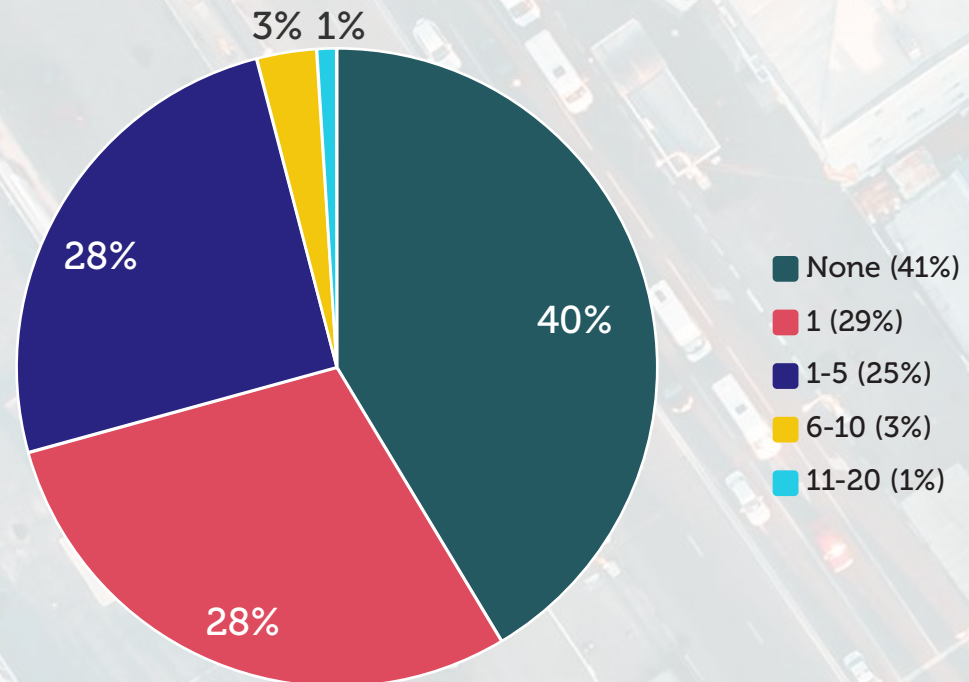
Fig. 37 - Mistakes made by those who don't have a checklist procedure and tests important emails



What we've found in this study is that people who use a structure like a pre-deployment process, whether formally written down or provided through an online platform, have fewer errors.

The 39% of marketers who said they made no mistakes got lucky. Really lucky. The saying among email veterans is that if you haven't committed a major error, you will.

Fig. 38 - Mistakes made by those who don't have a checklist procedure and tests important emails



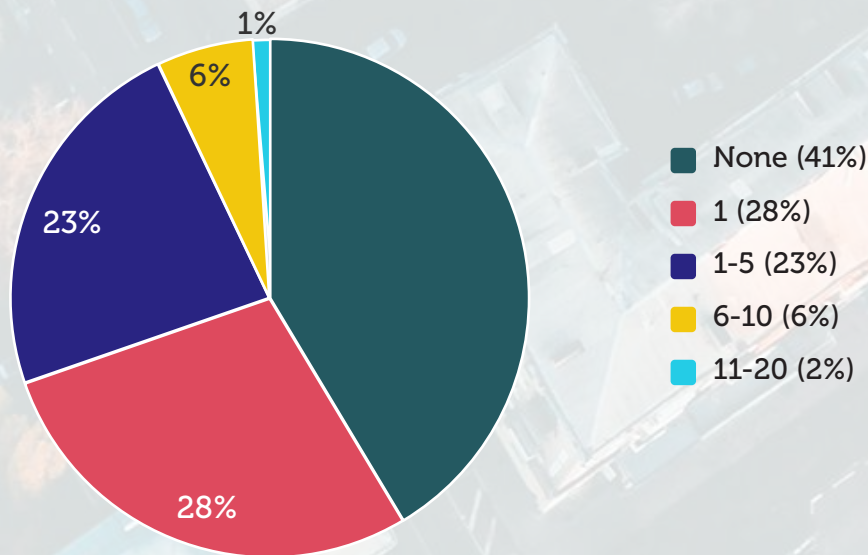
Our take: We all hate mistakes. At some companies, mistakes can trigger a U.N convention-sized meeting with everybody, including executives, weighing in. Nobody enjoys painful conversations about how the mistake happened, who was to blame and what would happen if the mistake occurred again. And somebody always worries about getting fired.

Sound familiar?

However, you have a lower rate of mistakes when you have structure in your pre-deployment process.

Everything else you do in marketing has a structure, from web and product development to merchandising.

Fig. 39 - Mistakes made by those who do procedure and tests when they ha



Every other facet of your company has structure and process. In meetings, people say you can't do that, and you didn't follow the process. Why not apply the same mindset to your email development and pre-deployment processes?

Fig. 40 - Mistakes made by those who don't have a checklist procedure and tests occasionally

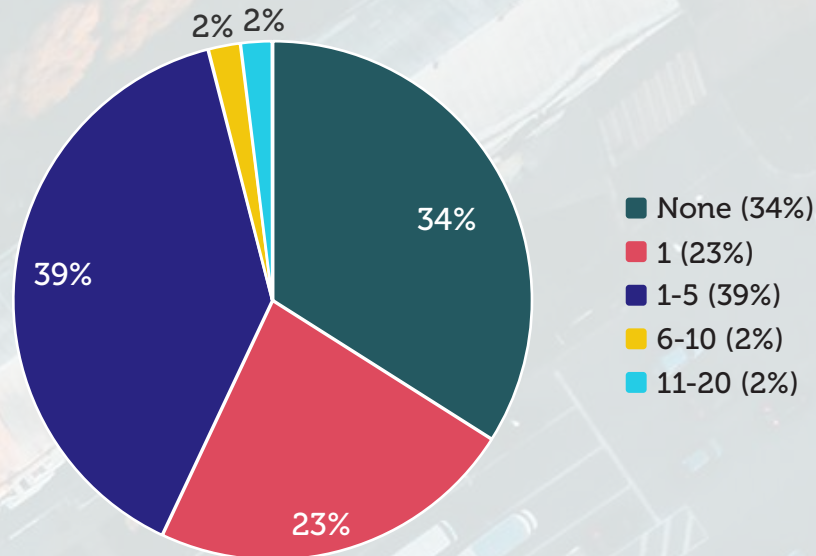
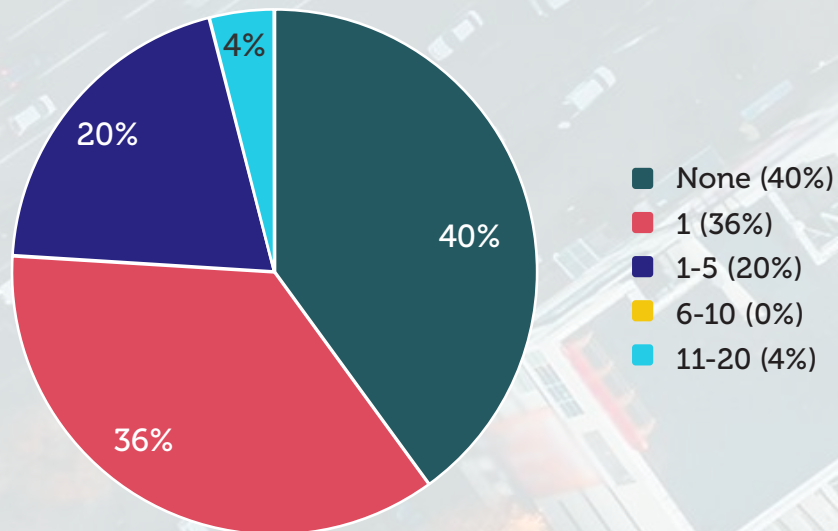


Fig. 41 - Mistakes made by those who don't have a checklist procedure and tests automated emails only



Conclusion: Sending Email Excellence

Look, we all know email is hard. Email marketers know this all too well. The rapid velocity of campaigns and the revenue dependency makes it a focus in nearly every company.

To ensure that you can accomplish your goals and not spend hours in meetings about mistakes, you need two things:

- A process that specifies what happens at every step of campaign development
- An accountability procedure that lists steps to be followed and requires sign-offs if that process is sidestepped.

The cost of making a mistake is large. It's not just the loss of business but the time spent in staff meetings to pin down the reason for the mistake and creating, testing and sending a correction email.

Mistakes also take their toll in public-facing ways, such as loss of trust and brand equity. Then there's the shame of having your email ridiculed on social media or professional groups

While it's hard to measure mistakes from a branding perspective, there is an absolute measurement of the cost in having to send an apology email.

Let's say you have five people involved in your pre-deployment process. When a mistake happens, those five people must divert their attention from what was pre-scheduled to create an on-the-spot campaign. You also lose time and money in meetings to plan a strategy to mitigate the problem. The costs of time lost, resources expended and opportunities missed mount up quickly.

This is what keeps email teams up at night and contributes to the fear of pushing the send button. So, when we talk about avoiding or mitigating that fear, we talk about testing email because too many things can go wrong.

Are you positive you didn't make a mistake in the last email you sent?

You will push "Send" more confidently when you have a solid pre-deployment process.

Email on Acid ensures marketers send email perfection - Every Campaign, Every Email. Let us show you how our fully automated pre-deployment checklist can ensure you never send a broken email again! Start your free trial today.