

SciLeads

The Psychology of

Cold Outreach

to Scientists

with Laura Haldane



Topics covered

- Using Psychology experiments to improve our emails
- Data from other experiments to determine the best tactics

How to enhance your emails

This is an example of a generic email that companies often deploy to a mass audience.

How can we apply psychology to improve upon this?

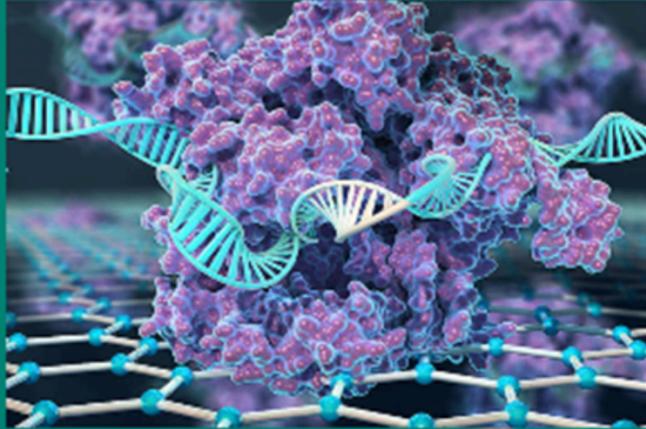
[View with images](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Visit website](#)



generic logo
company



NEW MICROSCOPE LAUNCH!



Generic Company will be demoing in Boston next week!

BOOK NOW

We have launched a new microscope and we'll just send this generic email out to whoever is in our years old CRM and hope this email is actually relevant to the people in it. Click on the button above if you want to book a demo when we're in Boston next week.

Some sort of fine print
Maybe add the logo again for good measure



generic logo
company

Maybe the company address
Somewhere in the US
And maybe a phone number
123-456-789

Poll

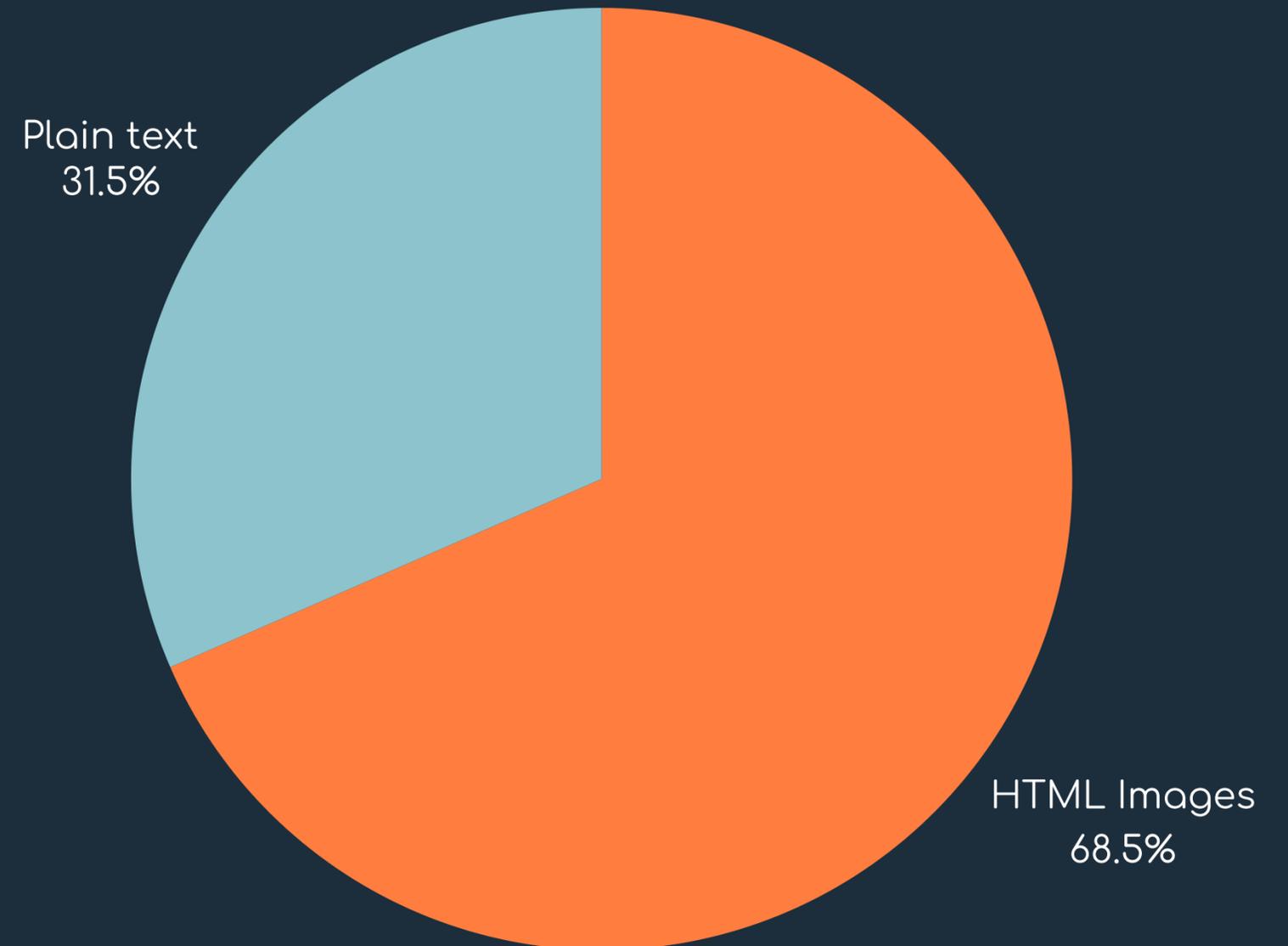
We asked our live webinar viewers to vote on which format they prefer for emails:

HTML IMAGES

or

PLAIN TEXT

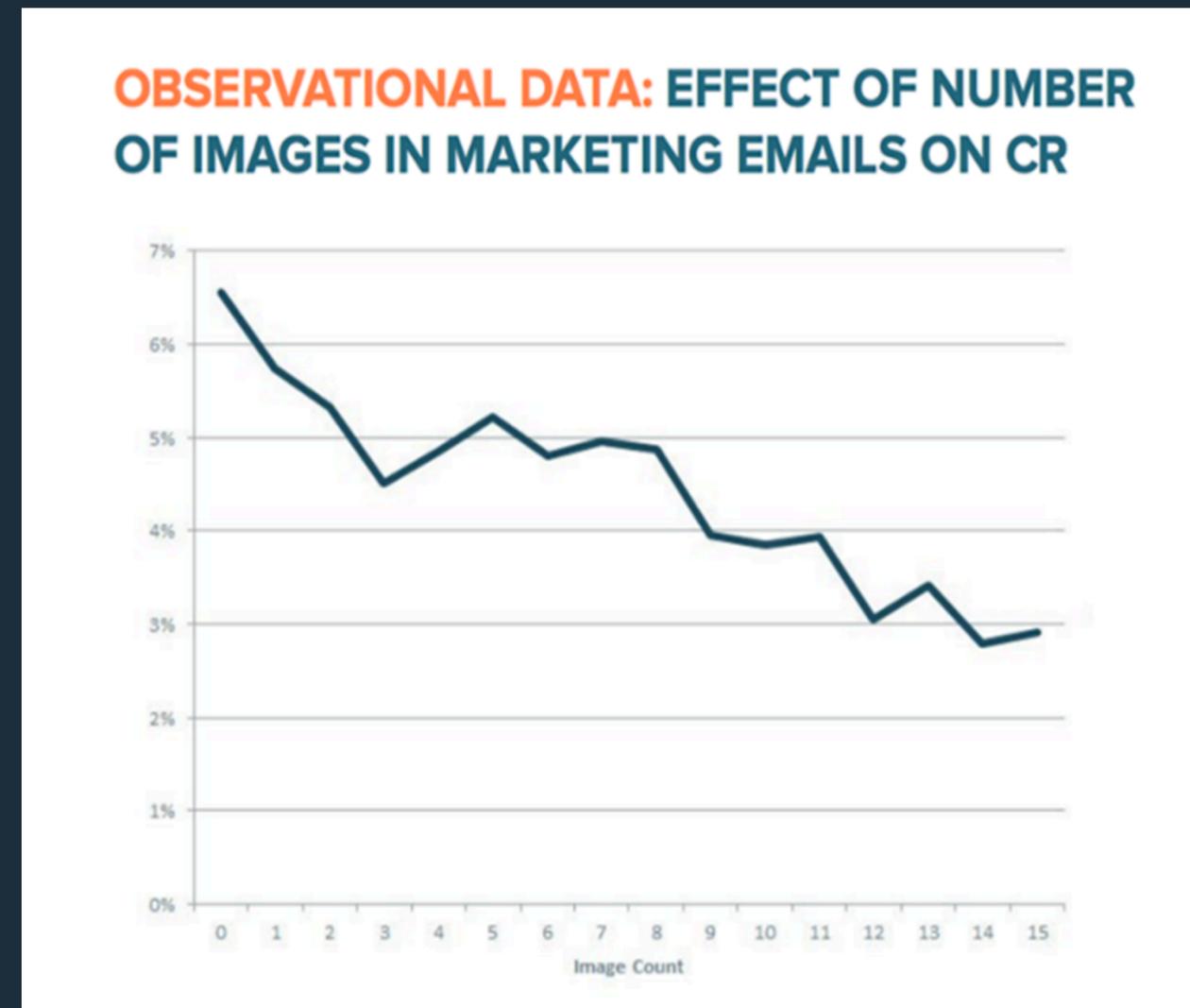
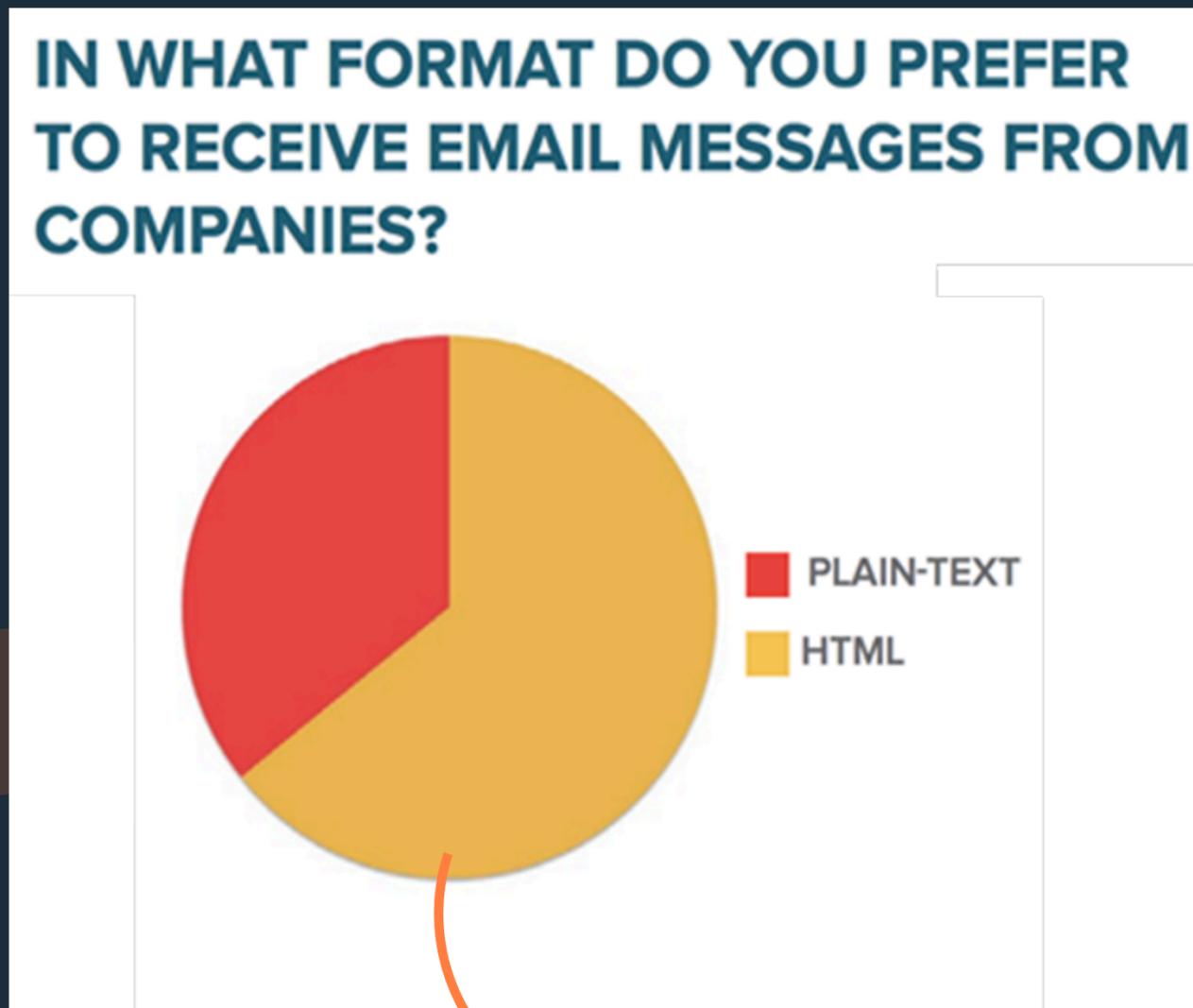
Results



*Responses from 200+ Sales and Marketing Professionals in Science 2025

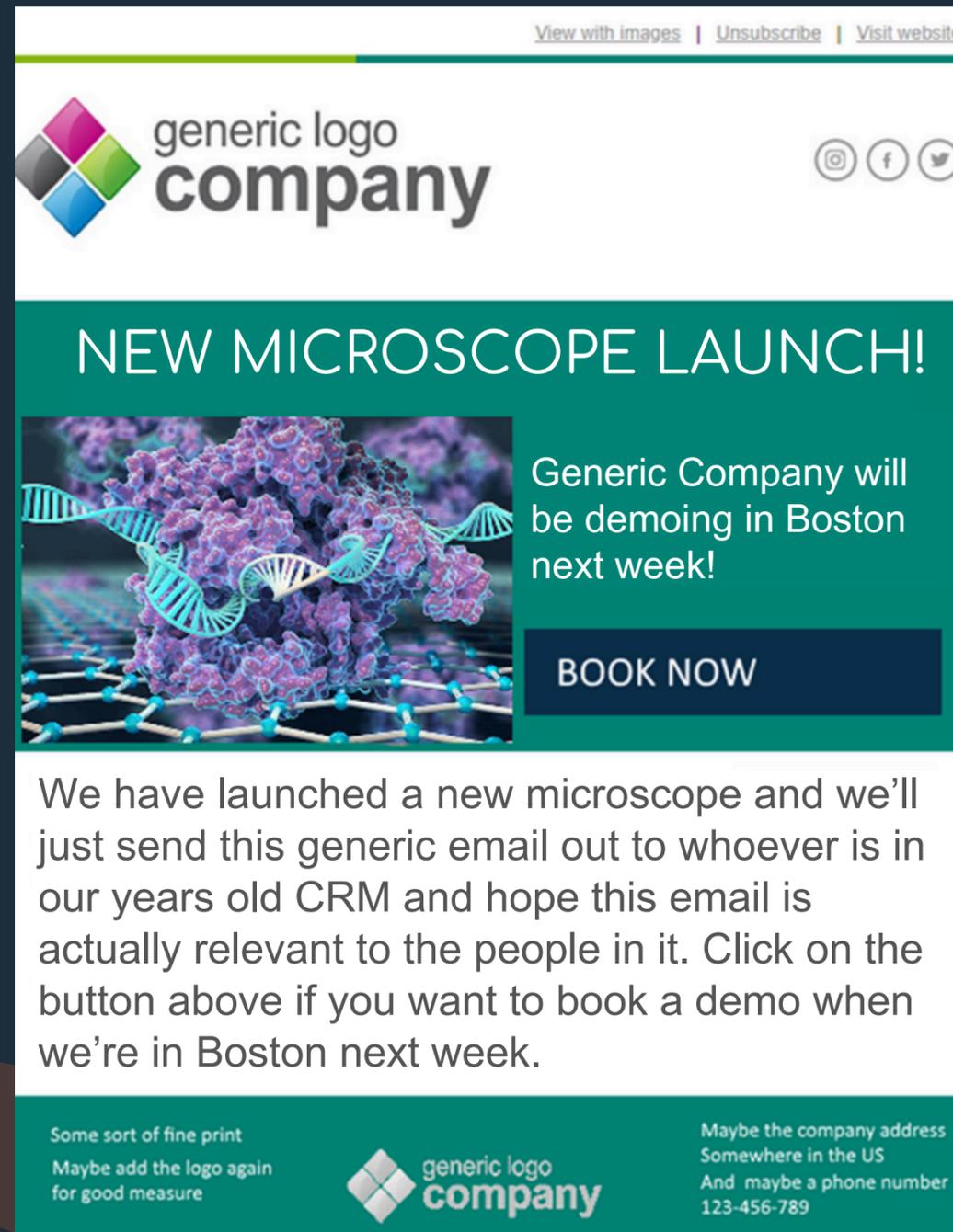
HTML Images

Although people voted that they prefer emails with images, Hubspot data shows that the more images an email has, the lower the click through rate.



How cool that our real time vote had basically identical results

So now that we know that conversion data, we need to change our email to plain text:



Hello,

I will be in Boston next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me?



More information on our product range can be found here:
www.company.com/products

Kind regards,
Laura

The importance of Personalization

Campaign Monitor reports that personalized emails have **2.5 times higher** click-through rates, and are **6 times more likely** to drive a conversion. Additionally, **73% of consumers** report they'd rather do business with brands that use personal information to increase the relevancy of their experiences.

Rich Relevance found that revenue is **5.7 times higher** in emails that employ personalization.



3 stages of Personalization*



1) Relevant



2) Timely



3) Comes from
a person

*See, I've even spelled personalisation 'incorrectly' since I know the audience of these slides will be predominantly American

Personalization



1) Relevant



2) Timely



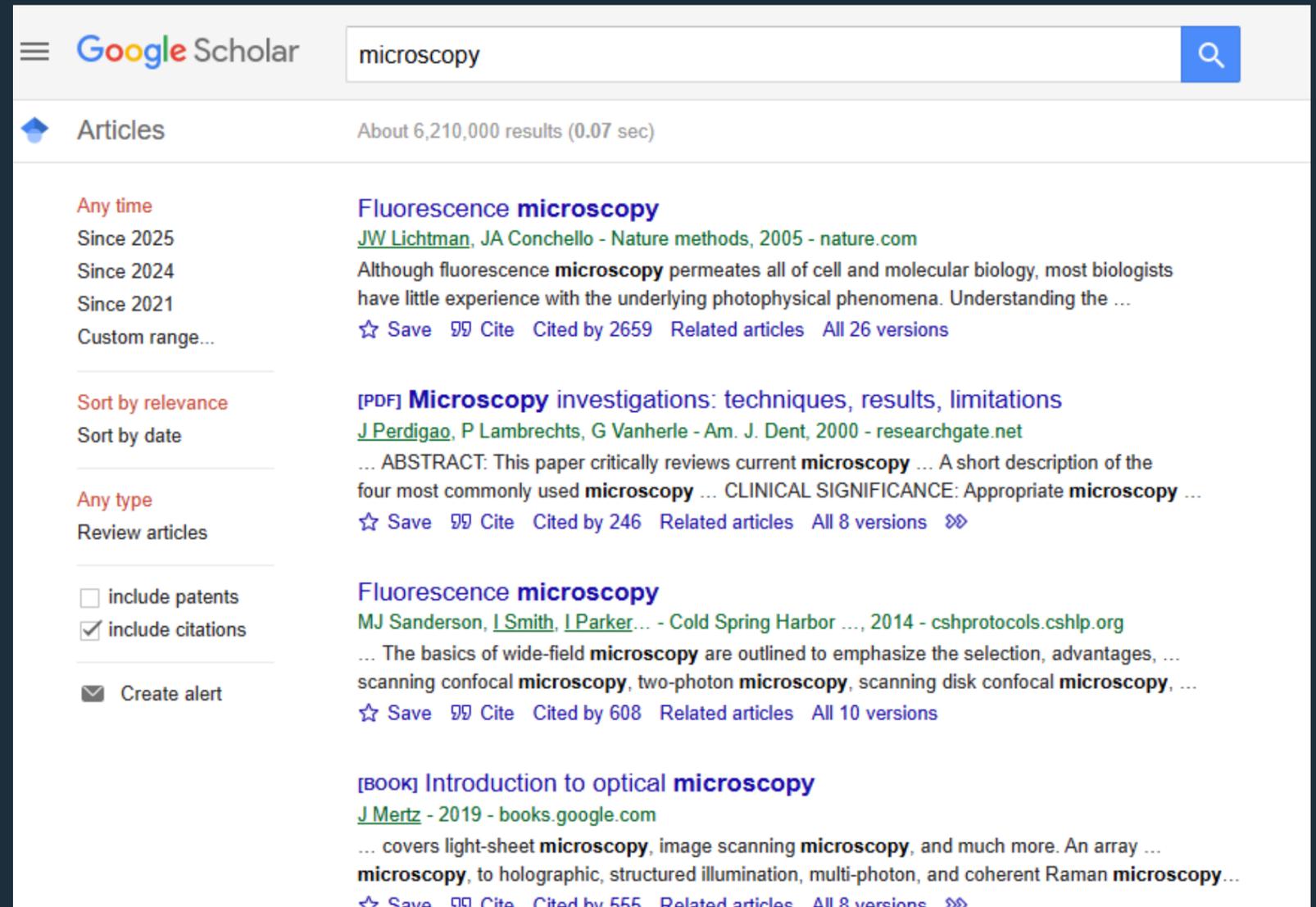
3) Comes from
a person

As there is so much freely available public data in our industry, there is no excuse not to make emails relevant to the audience they are being sent to.

Here are some examples of where to find data on your audience

Of course I'm going to mention that SciLeads collates all of this data into a searchable database so you can get the list on a click of a button. However, there are other free sources you can search online, such as:

Google Scholar - put in your application area and see who is doing research in that field and personalize your emails based on that.



The screenshot shows a Google Scholar search for 'microscopy'. The search bar at the top contains the word 'microscopy' and a search icon. Below the search bar, it indicates 'Articles' and 'About 6,210,000 results (0.07 sec)'. On the left side, there are filters for 'Any time' (with options: Since 2025, Since 2024, Since 2021, Custom range...), 'Sort by relevance' (with option: Sort by date), 'Any type' (with option: Review articles), and checkboxes for 'include patents' (unchecked) and 'include citations' (checked). At the bottom left, there is a 'Create alert' button. The main results area shows three entries:

- Fluorescence microscopy**
JW Lichtman, JA Conchello - Nature methods, 2005 - nature.com
Although fluorescence **microscopy** permeates all of cell and molecular biology, most biologists have little experience with the underlying photophysical phenomena. Understanding the ...
☆ Save 📄 Cite Cited by 2659 Related articles All 26 versions
- [PDF] Microscopy investigations: techniques, results, limitations**
J Perdigao, P Lambrechts, G Vanherle - Am. J. Dent, 2000 - researchgate.net
... ABSTRACT: This paper critically reviews current **microscopy** ... A short description of the four most commonly used **microscopy** ... CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Appropriate **microscopy** ...
☆ Save 📄 Cite Cited by 246 Related articles All 8 versions 📄
- Fluorescence microscopy**
MJ Sanderson, I Smith, I Parker... - Cold Spring Harbor ..., 2014 - cshprotocols.cshlp.org
... The basics of wide-field **microscopy** are outlined to emphasize the selection, advantages, ... scanning confocal **microscopy**, two-photon **microscopy**, scanning disk confocal **microscopy**, ...
☆ Save 📄 Cite Cited by 608 Related articles All 10 versions
- [BOOK] Introduction to optical microscopy**
J Mertz - 2019 - books.google.com
... covers light-sheet **microscopy**, image scanning **microscopy**, and much more. An array ... **microscopy**, to holographic, structured illumination, multi-photon, and coherent Raman **microscopy**...
☆ Save 📄 Cite Cited by 555 Related articles All 8 versions 📄

Local university website - in our email example from before we said we are heading to Boston, so go onto their university website and find the Principal Investigator (PI) and tailor your messaging to them.

 College of Engineering
Biomicroscopy Lab

[Main](#) [People](#) [Research](#) [Publications](#) [Book](#) [Resources](#)

Biomicroscopy Lab

Our lab works on the development of new microscopy techniques for biomedical imaging

PI: Jerome Mertz

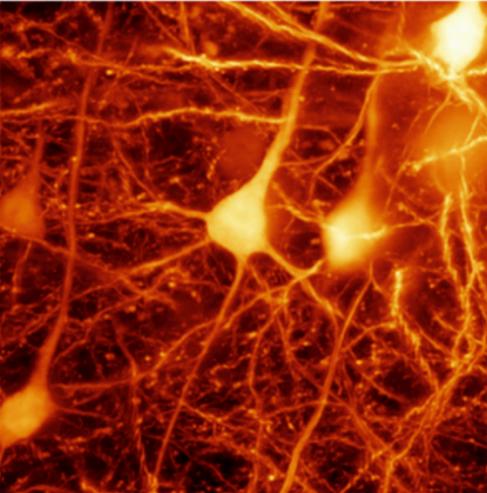
Office phone: 617-358-0746
jmertz(at)bu.edu

Physical address:

24 Cummington Mall
Lab phone: 617-358-2767

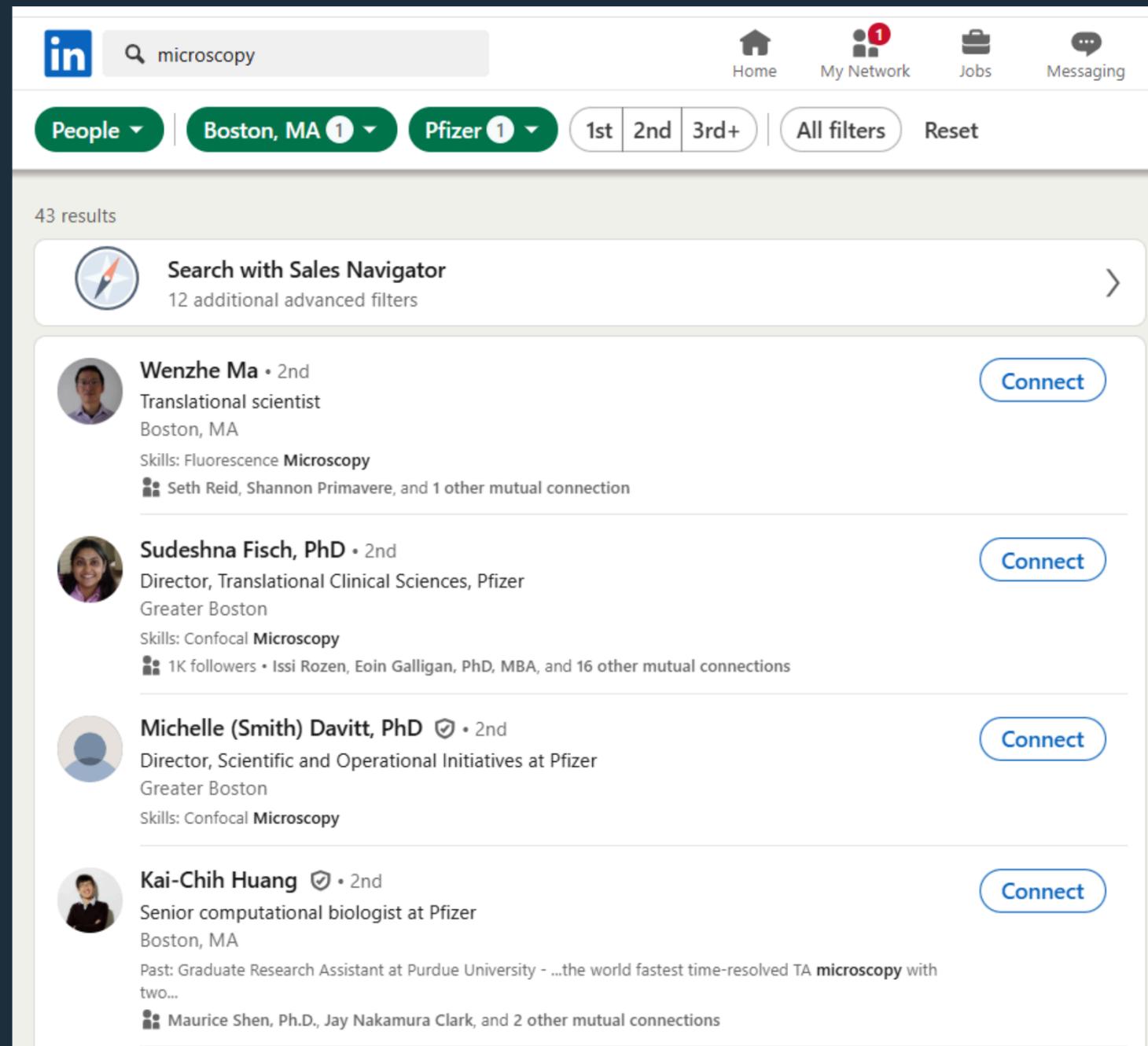
Mail address:

44 Cummington Mall
Boston, MA 02215



Boston University [Search](#) [Directory](#) [BU Today](#)

LinkedIn - if you're dealing more in the biotech and pharma side then you can use LinkedIn. Put in your parameters such as Microscopy, people in Boston, employees in Pfizer and it will give you a list of relevant people to contact (albeit without the email addresses)



The screenshot shows a LinkedIn search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the word "microscopy". Navigation icons for Home, My Network (with a notification badge), Jobs, and Messaging are visible. Below the search bar, filters are applied: "People", "Boston, MA" (1 result), and "Pfizer" (1 result). Additional filters for "1st", "2nd", and "3rd+" connections are also present, along with "All filters" and "Reset" buttons. The search results show 43 results. A "Search with Sales Navigator" option is available with 12 additional advanced filters. The first four results are:

- Wenzhe Ma** • 2nd
Translational scientist
Boston, MA
Skills: Fluorescence **Microscopy**
Seth Reid, Shannon Primavera, and 1 other mutual connection
- Sudeshna Fisch, PhD** • 2nd
Director, Translational Clinical Sciences, Pfizer
Greater Boston
Skills: Confocal **Microscopy**
1K followers • Issi Rozen, Eoin Galligan, PhD, MBA, and 16 other mutual connections
- Michelle (Smith) Davitt, PhD** ✓ • 2nd
Director, Scientific and Operational Initiatives at Pfizer
Greater Boston
Skills: Confocal **Microscopy**
- Kai-Chih Huang** ✓ • 2nd
Senior computational biologist at Pfizer
Boston, MA
Past: Graduate Research Assistant at Purdue University - ...the world fastest time-resolved TA **microscopy** with two...
Maurice Shen, Ph.D., Jay Nakamura Clark, and 2 other mutual connections

Personalization



1) Relevant



2) Timely



3) Comes from
a person

Having the right email at the right time is also essential - for example do you know if the people you're targeting are in a position to buy?

NIH RePORT RePORTER FAQs API ExPORTER Sign In

Search Results Save... Export Share
 185,991 Projects

microscopy

Projects Publications Patents Clinical Studies News & More

List Charts Map

T	Act	Project	Year	Sub	Principal Investigator(s)/ Project Leader(s)	Organization	Fiscal Year	Admin IC	Funding IC	FY Total Cost by IC	Similar Projects
Biological Imaging Module											
5		P30EY007551-38		6861	PATEL, NIMESH BHIKHU	UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON	2025	NEI	NEI	\$111,721	View >
Advanced Biophotonics Core (BPHO)											
5		P30CA014195-52		7639	SHADEL, GERALD	SALK INSTITUTE FOR BIOLOGICAL STUDIES	2025	NCI	NCI	\$209,684	View >
Microscopy											
5		P30CA016086-49		6904	BEAR, JAMES E	UNIV OF NORTH CAROLINA CHAPEL HILL	2025	NCI	NCI	\$183,101	View >

Filters: Active Projects
 > Fiscal Years
 > Org Names
 > Agencies
 > States

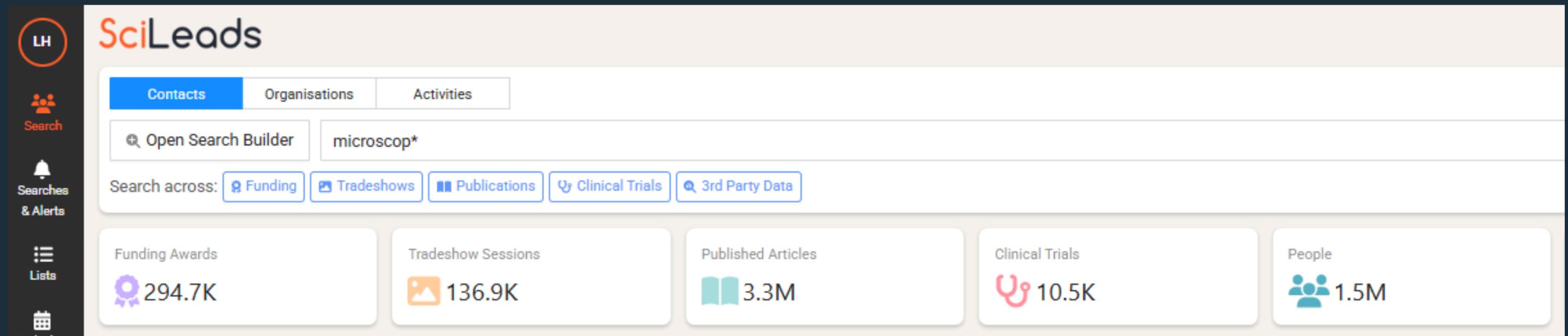
Go to **NIH Reporter** and look to see who recently got funding in that application area. That way you know they have money to potentially spend on your product.

Crunchbase - I used their free AI tool with the prompt “show me the companies recently funded that mention microscopy” and it gave us a list of four.

(SciLeads has 38.9k companies who mention microscopy that were funded this year)

The screenshot shows the 'crunchbase scout' interface. On the left, there is a 'Start New Chat' button and a chat history entry for 'Recent Microscopy Fu...'. The main chat area shows a conversation where the AI assistant asks, 'Hey there! Need help finding private company data, funding information, or a list of companies? Let me know!'. A blue input box contains the prompt: 'show me companies recently funded that mention microscopy'. Below this, there is a 'Search Steps' section with a plus sign. The AI response states: 'Here are some companies that were recently funded and are related to microscopy:'. It lists two companies: 1. **4Tissue**, with details on description, location (Zwijnaarde, Belgium), and funding (€3,500,000 total, including a \$1,049,738 Seed Round in Feb 2025). 2. **Tianmei Times**, described as a company specializing in spectroscopy and mass spectrometry.

SciLeads does that hard work for you



The screenshot displays the SciLeads web application interface. At the top left, there is a user profile icon labeled 'LH'. Below it, a vertical sidebar contains navigation icons for 'Search', 'Alerts', and 'Lists'. The main header area features the SciLeads logo and three tabs: 'Contacts' (selected), 'Organisations', and 'Activities'. A search bar contains the text 'microscop*' and an 'Open Search Builder' button. Below the search bar, a row of filters includes 'Funding', 'Tradeshows', 'Publications', 'Clinical Trials', and '3rd Party Data'. The main content area consists of five summary cards:

Category	Count
Funding Awards	294.7K
Tradeshows Sessions	136.9K
Published Articles	3.3M
Clinical Trials	10.5K
People	1.5M

For those with SciLeads, you simply type in your keyword and all the sources are collated for you. You'll see there are 1.5m people associated with microscopy, and you can filter this number down by grants awarded, location, tradeshow attendance and more.

Personalization



1) Relevant



2) Timely



3) Comes from
a person

People are less likely to ignore emails that come from someone's name rather than just your company name. So even if it's an email to multiple people, send it from a person.

Putting this into action:

- Personalize it with their name, don't just write "Hi".
- Put in a mention of the application area so it's relevant to them.
- Show your credibility and increase conversions by adding your job/title such as 'Application Specialist' or if you've a PhD put 'Dr'.

Hi <FirstName>

I will be in Boston next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me?

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, **given your microscopy background**, I think will be really interesting.

More information on our product range can be found here: www.company.com/products

Kind regards,
Laura Haldane
Application Specialist
+1 415 663 5194

Posters are a great hook!

- Can use funding as the trigger but posters are a better way to start a conversation.
- It's much more personalized and explains why you're reaching out to them.



Hi <FirstName>

I will be in Boston next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me?

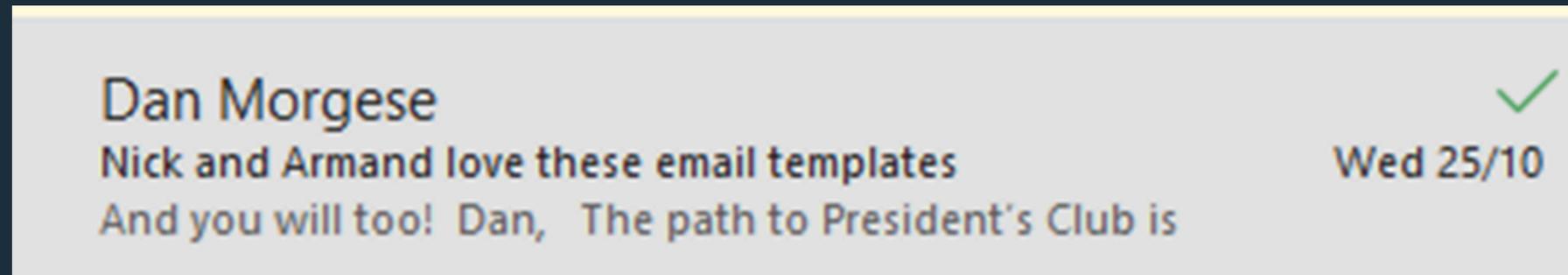
I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <Tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting.

More information on our product range can be found here: www.company.com/products

Kind regards,
Laura Haldane
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What the customer sees in their inbox

1. Your Name
2. Subject Header
3. Opening Line



47% of people say they open an email based on the subject alone so these 3 things need to be optimized.

Tips:

- Make sure it says your name and not just your email address
- Personalize the subject line to the person

Personalized subject lines work better

Personalized
Subject Lines



35.69%
Open Rate

Non-Personalized
Subject Lines



16.67%
Open Rate

klenty

This is where using their posters works SO well. Of course they are going to open an email that lists a literal presentation they recently gave



Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

I will be in Boston next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me?

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <Tradeshow> poster “<poster title>”, I think will be really interesting.

More information on our product range can be found here: www.company.com/products

Kind regards,
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Application Specialist
+1 415 663 5194

Example



Arima Genomics develops advanced solutions for 3D genomic mapping.

They wanted to build scalable, personalized campaigns that reached key decision-makers and encouraged them to respond.

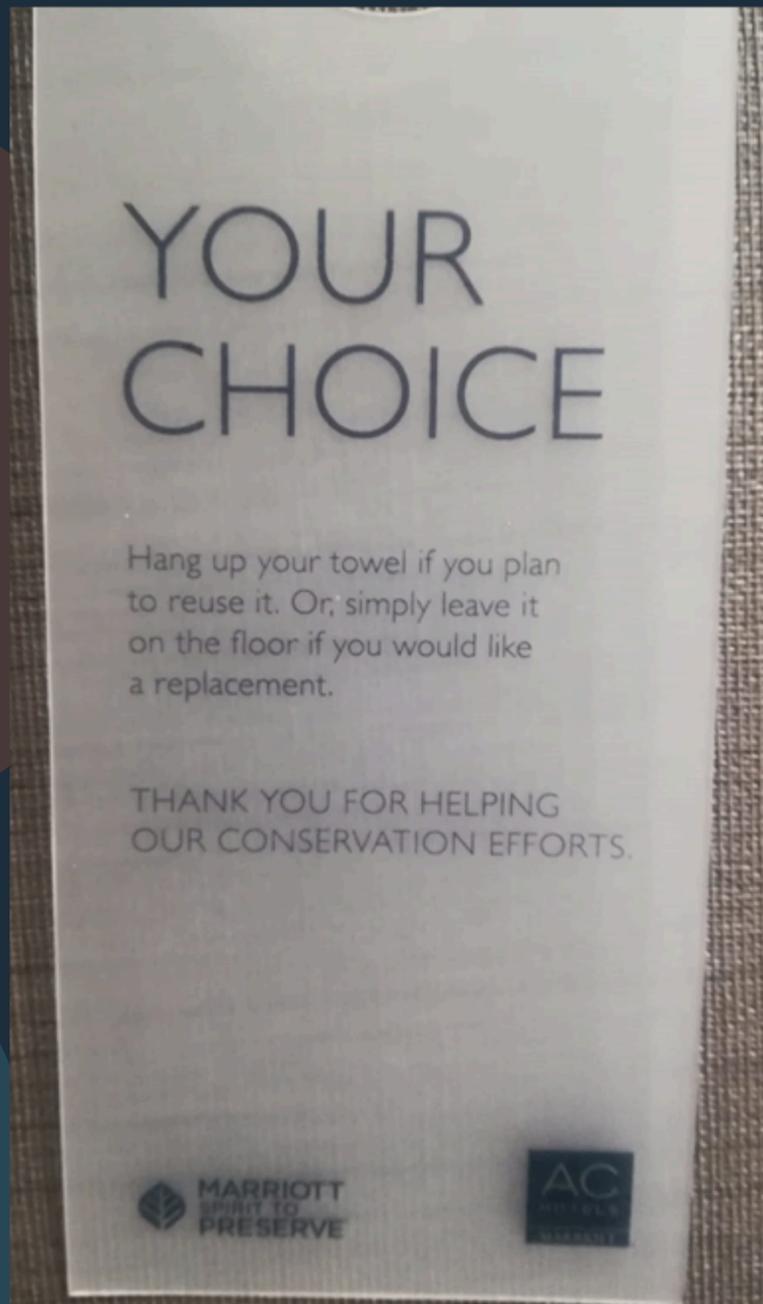
By combining SciLeads' high-quality data with AI-driven email personalization, Arima Genomics achieved exceptional results often associated with multi-email campaigns—all in their first outreach. This streamlined approach saved valuable time and resources while driving impactful engagement with researchers and decision-makers.

17% 1st email response rates

Arima Genomics used our weekly Biotech funding email (TIMELY) to write a PERSONALIZED email and achieved a 17% response rate to their initial cold emails. Yes, that was before they even followed up!

This is significantly higher than the typical 9% rate for 1–3 email sequences and nearly equaling the 20% averages seen in extended campaigns of 4–7 emails (source: Woodpecker.io)

Behavioural science - how to encourage the results you want



A hotel wanted to help the environment and encourage people to reuse their towels.

They said to customers “**Most people staying in this hotel reuse their towels**” and it worked - there was a **26%** increase in towel reuse.

This is an example of a "descriptive norm" which is used to influence behavior by informing individuals that the majority of people in a similar situation are acting in a specific way, thereby encouraging them to do the same.

Behavioural science - how to encourage the results you want



Collette Szot at a well known shopping channel used this technique to encourage more phone calls and sales by changing the tag line on the screen to be “If our lines are busy, please call back”.

She put up barriers to purchase so the customers didn't bother calling right? **Wrong!**

She absolutely smashed through all sales records because she created a sense of scarcity. People often value things more when they're harder to get and everyone else is doing it.

Putting these techniques into action:

- Create the appearance of scarcity with your time.
- Give them FOMO! Say your colleagues are already meeting you to encourage them to book a meeting too.



Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

I will be in Boston next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me? *I have limited availability as I'm meeting your colleagues but would be delighted to meet you.*

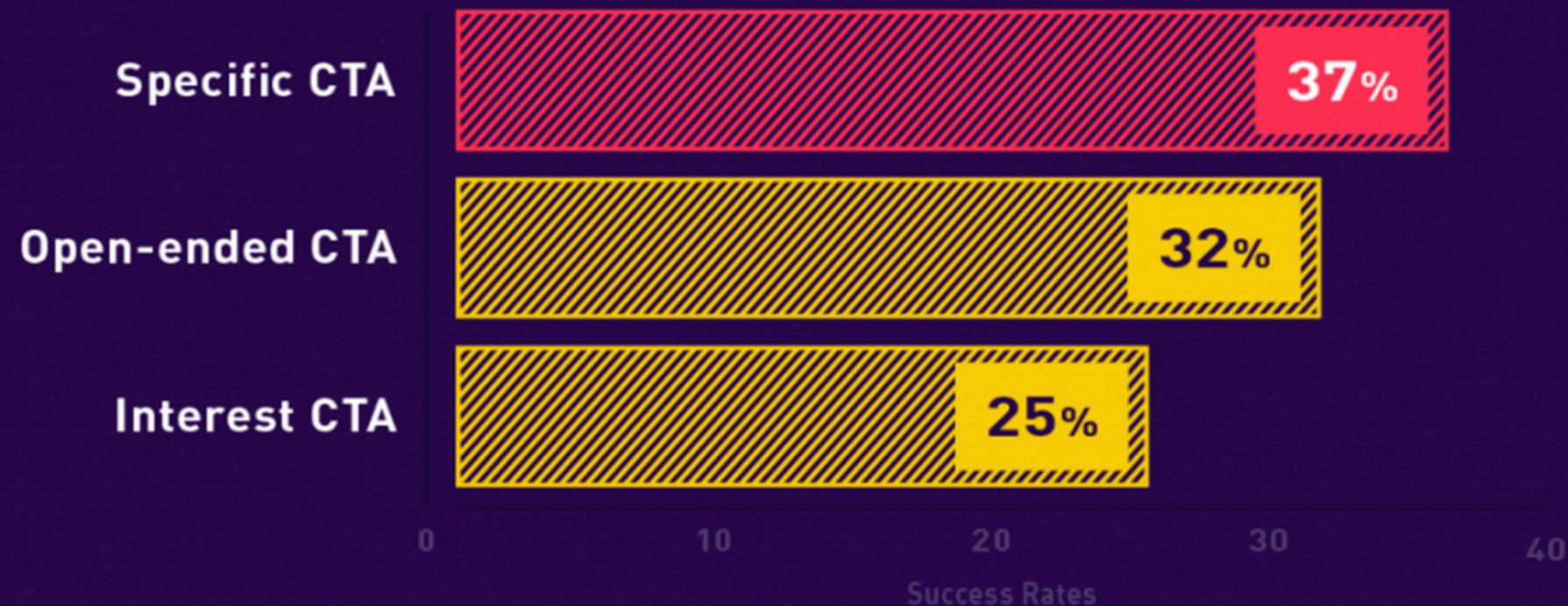
I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <Tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting.

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Gong found that having a **specific call to action** got a better response, such as “Are you free on this day and at this time?”.

Deal Emails: Ask for a specific day and time in your CTA



Gong - Surprising cold email CTA that increases meeting bookings

Provide specific options to create a sense of urgency, limit complacency, and encourage a response.



Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

I will be in Boston next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me? **I have limited availability as I've quite a number of meetings but could do 10am, 1pm or 3:30pm? Which would you prefer?**

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <Tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting.

More information on our product range can be found here: www.company.com/products

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Choice - we can have too much of it!

What do jam and Head & Shoulders have in common?

A study at an upscale supermarket found that a display with 24 flavours of a manufacturer's jam resulted in only 3% of people making a purchase. Reducing the choice to 6 flavours led to 30% of people buying at least one jar.

Similarly, Head and Shoulders saw a **10% increase** in sales by reducing their varieties from 26 to 15.



It can be risky offering specific times to multiple people, so you can still reduce choice paralysis and not double book yourself by asking if they prefer a morning or afternoon slot.

Tip: if you have an online booking link for meetings, don't have too many open slots showing! You're in demand, remember?

Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

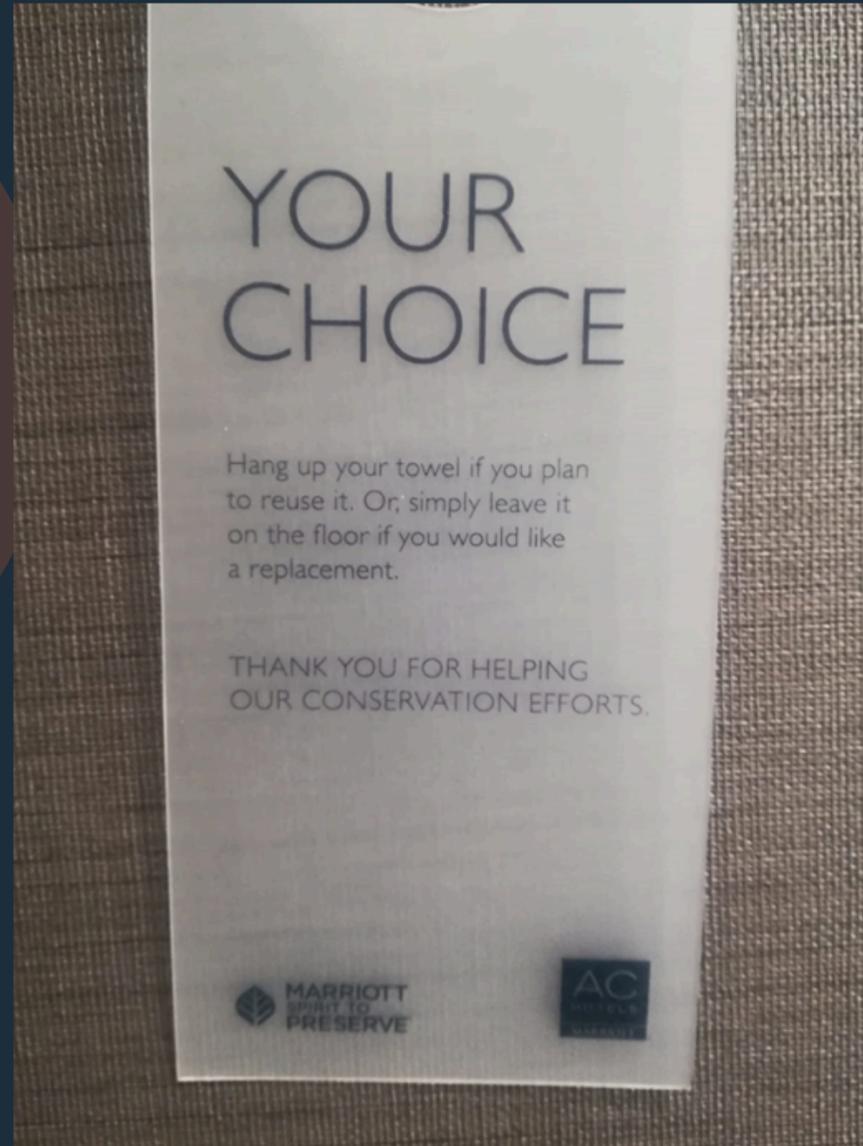
I will be in Boston next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me? **I have two meeting slots remaining. Would you prefer Tuesday afternoon or Tuesday morning?**

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting.

More information on our product range can be found here: www.company.com/products

Kind regards,
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Application Specialist
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Remember the towels?



After their 26% increase in uptake, the hotel took it a step further by saying “Most people in this room reuse their towels” and the uptake went up to 33%.

This is a core aspect of ‘herd behavior’ where we adjust our behavior to align with the group norm. The perceived actions of others creates a ‘social pressure’, leading us to conform to the group dynamic.



Here I have said I will be in their institution - again it's personalized and gives the perception that I am meeting with their colleagues and they might miss out, but it also reduces any 'friction' - I'm coming to them, so there is less effort needed on their part.

This method could also be used for tradeshow you're both attending.

Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

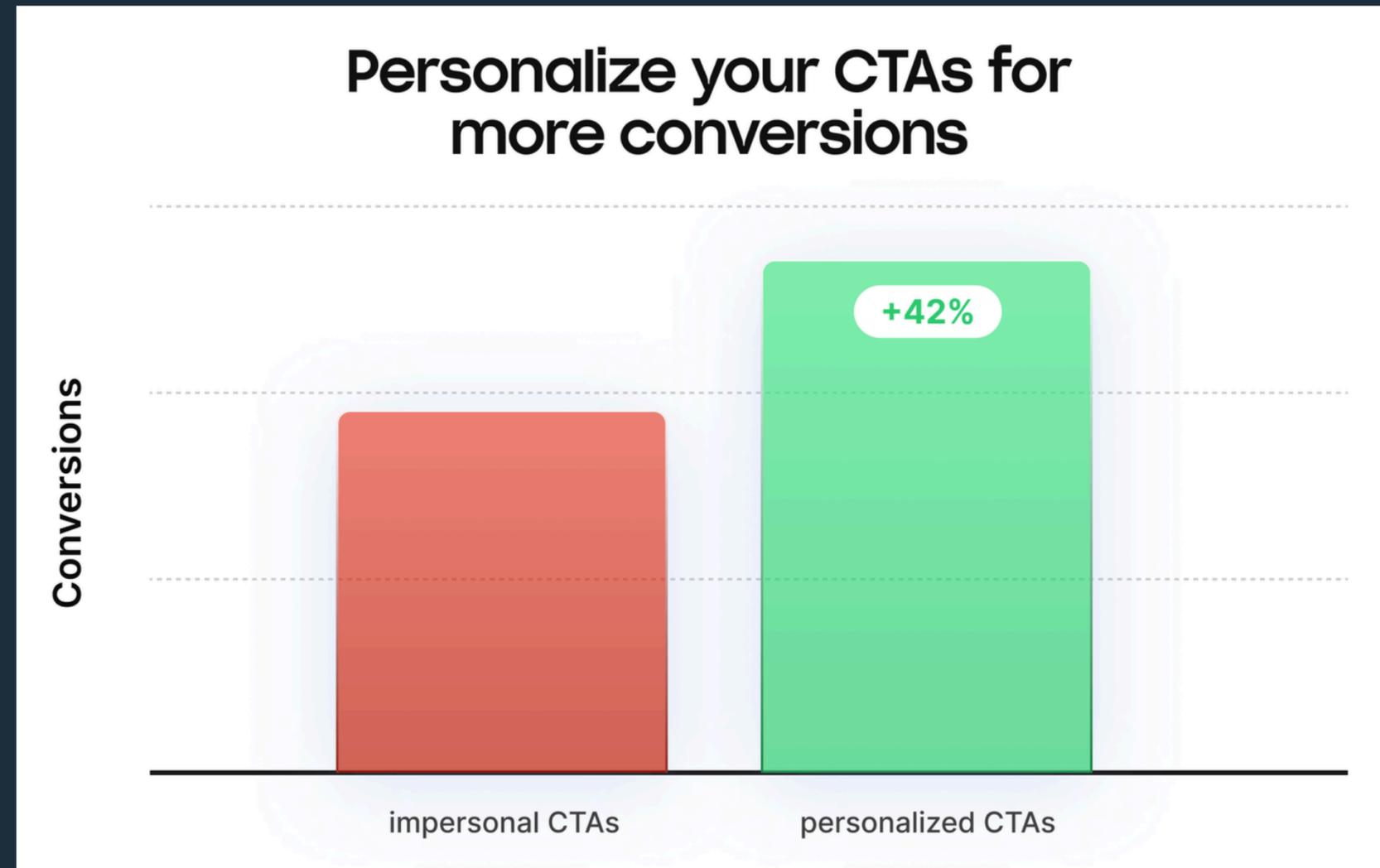
I will be in <institution> next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me? I have two slots meeting slots remaining. Would you prefer Tuesday afternoon or Tuesday morning?

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting.

Here's a link to a case study done by one of your colleagues: www.link.com

Kind regards,
Laura Haldane
Application Specialist
+1 415 663 5194

Personalized CTAs work better



Lemlist Call-to-Action in Email blog

For example, by doing some research you can find even more ways to personalize the message such as linking to a colleague's publication to create a CTA personal to them.



Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

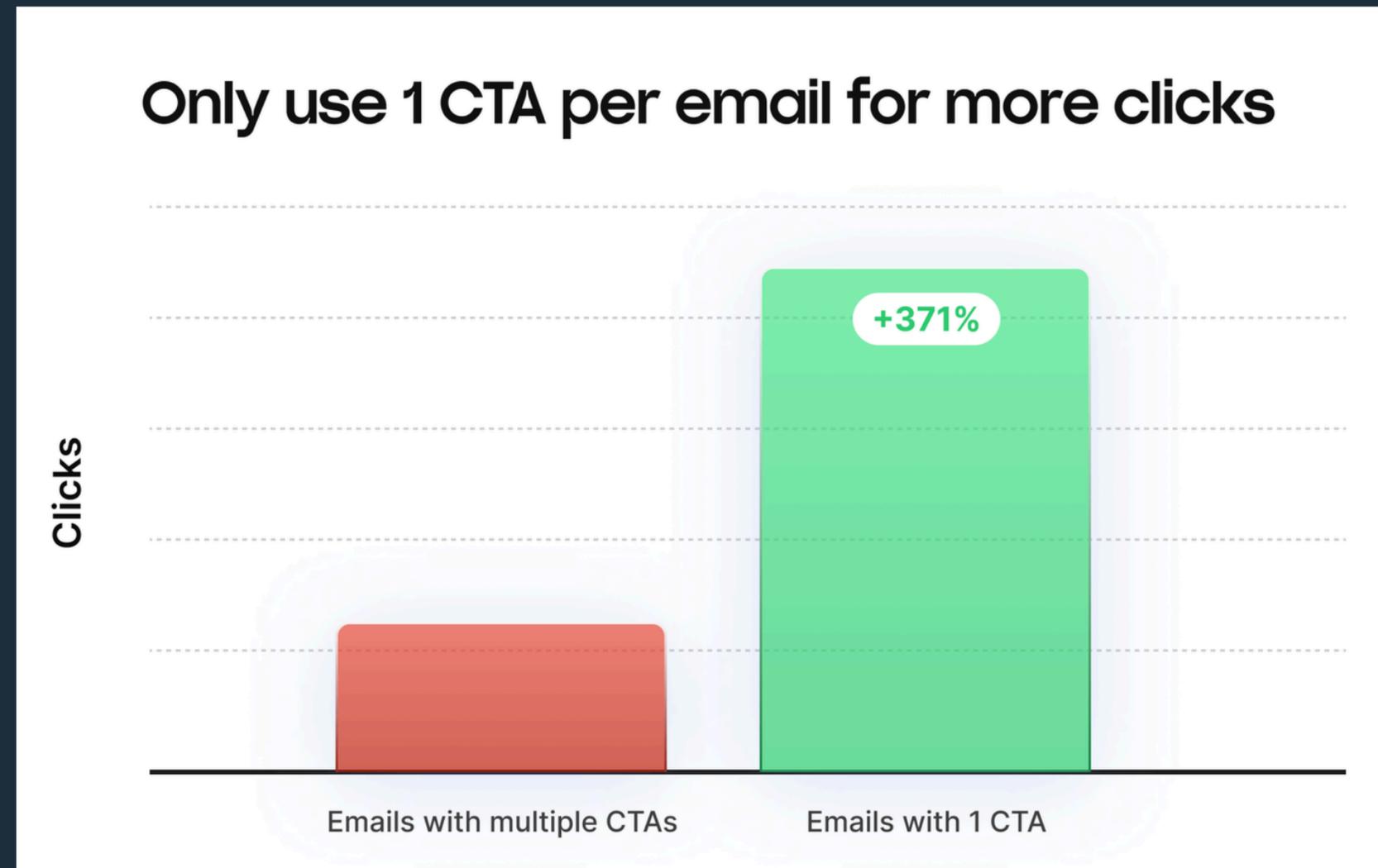
I will be in <institution> next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me? I have two slots meeting slots remaining. Would you prefer Tuesday afternoon or Tuesday morning?

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting.

Here's a link to a publication by one of your colleagues referencing the microscope: www.link.com please take a read.

Kind regards,
Laura Haldane
Application Specialist
+1 415 663 5194

Stick to 1 CTA - like choice paralysis, the more options there are, the less likely any of them will be picked



Lemlist Call-to-Action in Email blog

Rather than asking them to book a meeting and click a link to a publication, I'll pick the most important, which for me is booking a meeting.

I do still want to show that I have personalized this message, so I will simply attach the publication directly to my email instead of asking them to click a link.



Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

I will be in <institution> next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me? I have two slots meeting slots remaining. *Would you prefer Tuesday afternoon or Tuesday morning?*

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting.

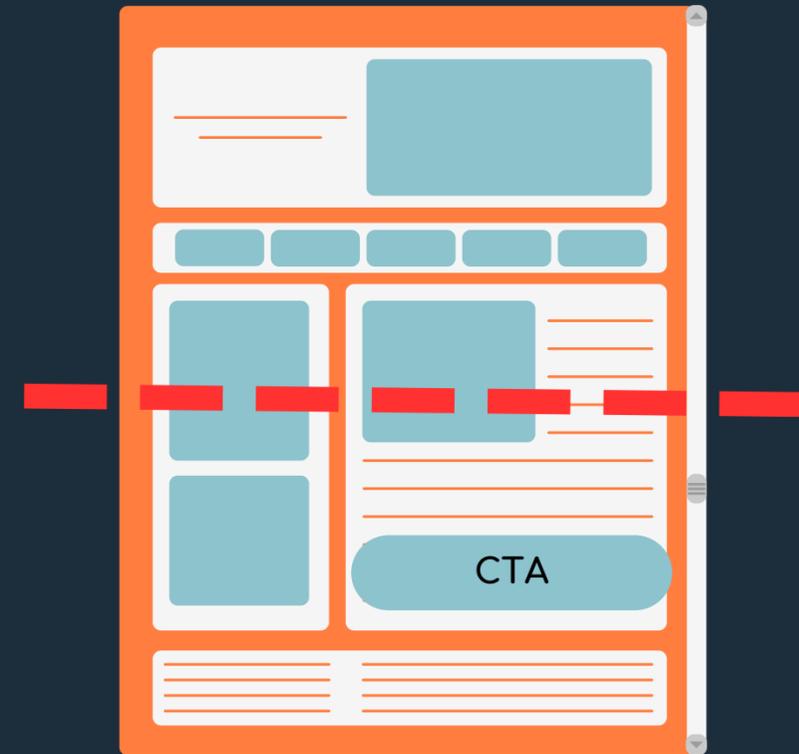
I have attached a publication by one of your colleagues referencing the microscope: www.link.com

Kind regards,
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Application Specialist
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Where should I place my CTA?



According to Neil Patel's research on QuickSprout, placing a Call-to-Action (CTA) button "above the fold" on a webpage resulted in a 17% decrease in conversions, indicating that users generally prefer to understand the offer fully before clicking, meaning they benefit from reading more information below the fold before taking action.



Answer: near the bottom of the page / email!

Moving the CTA to the end ensures people scroll through all of your email, and it gives them the chance to digest the information before taking action.

Tip: It's ok to leave your CTA hanging there - don't be tempted to add a closing sentence like "Let me know if you're interested" as that dilutes your request.



Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>

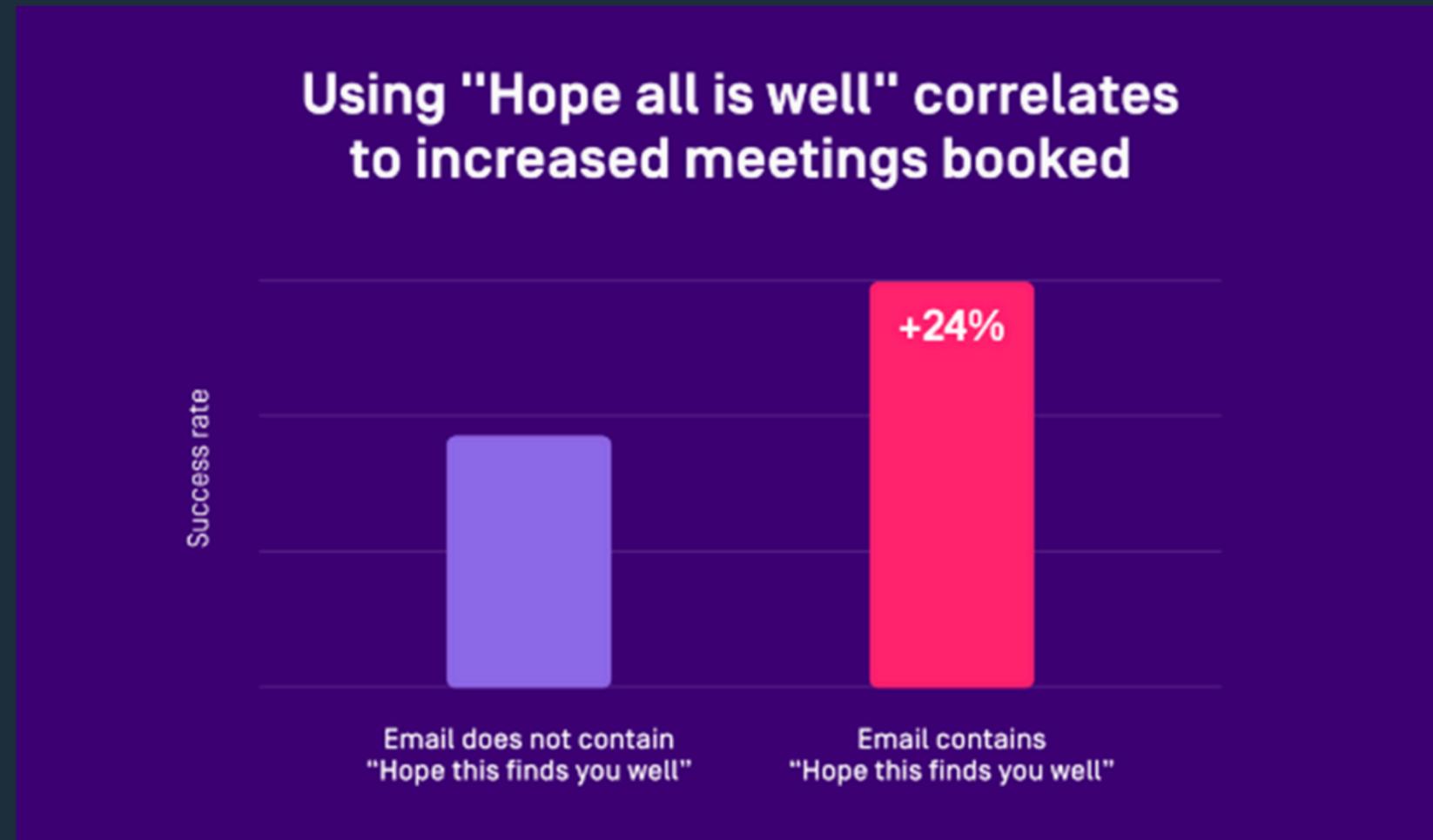
I will be in <institution> next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me?

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting. I have attached a publication by one of your colleagues referencing the microscope: www.link.com

I have two slots meeting slots remaining. Would you prefer Tuesday afternoon or Tuesday morning?

Kind regards,
Laura Haldane
Application Specialist
+1 415 663 5194

Gong found that starting your message with “**Hope this email finds you well**” actually increases response rates



Gong: 7 tips for writing the perfect follow-up sales email

I know some people hate this opener and think “Just tell me why you’re emailing me!” but the data says differently, and sometimes opinions don’t always align with reality!

Subject Line <poster title> at <tradeshow>

Hi <FirstName>



I find this greeting also gives the perception that you have met this person before and it's therefore natural that you're enquiring about their health.

It means you don't need to worry about splitting our outreach list by people you know and those that you don't as it works for both.

I **hope you're well!** I will be in <institution> next week and was wondering if you had availability to meet with me?

I wanted to talk about our new microscope which, given your <tradeshow> poster "<poster title>", I think will be really interesting. I have attached a publication by one of your colleagues referencing the microscope:
www.link.com

I have two slots meeting slots remaining. Would you prefer Tuesday afternoon or Tuesday morning?

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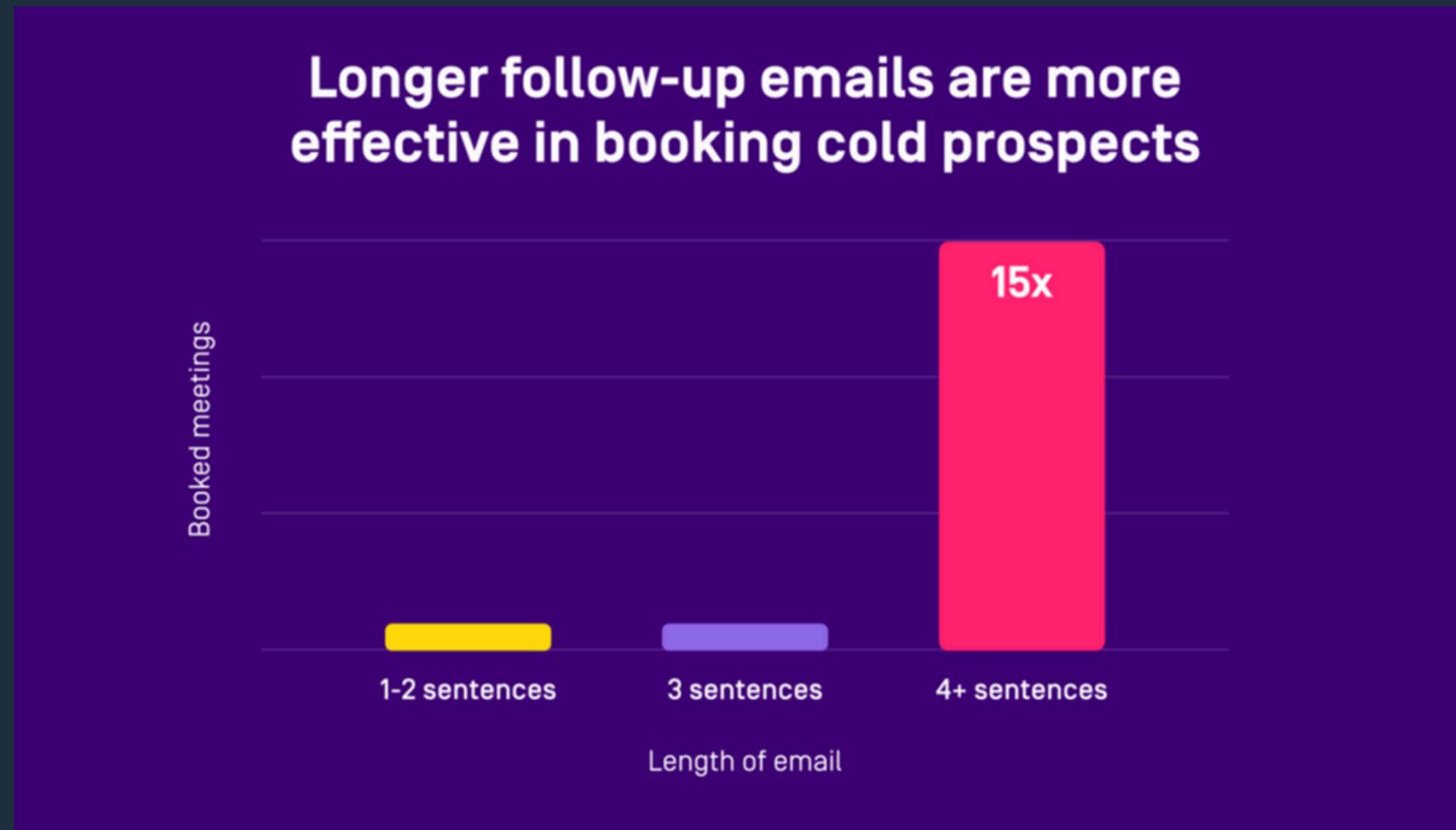
Follow ups - what to do when you get no response

Continuum cold-emailed 578 prospects, got a total of 6 responses, and used follow up e-mails to get 67 additional responses (for a total response rate of about 12.6%). They ran a six-week campaign, targeted 291 VPs of sales as well as 287 VPs of sales operations, and ended up with a total of 73 new leads.

VP Sales: 1A									
Touch	Contacted	Bounced	Reached	Opened	Open Rate	Replied	Adjusted Response Rate	Do Not Contact	
1	142	14	128	77	68%	0	0.00%	0	
2	128	0	128	55	43%	3	5.45%	0	
3	125	3	122	40	34%	3	7.50%	0	
4	119	0	119	45	38%	3	6.67%	0	
5	116	1	115	54	47%	2	3.70%	0	
6	113	0	113	27	24%	2	7.41%	0	
7	111	0	111	43	39%	1	2.33%	0	
8	109	0	109	49	45%	3	6.12%	0	
Totals		18				17			

Tip: **Be politely persistent!** People are busy, so it's not necessarily the case that they aren't interested, they just have other priorities. It's ok to keep going until at least you get a "no thanks", as long as you are always polite.

Put some effort into your follow up. Don't just say "Did you see my last email" or "I never heard back" because you're simply reminding them that they decided not to reply to you! For each follow up try to tailor every single one, like oh I saw you published this, I read your poster etc



Gong's analysis of follow-up emails shows that follow-up sales emails with 4+ sentences get 15x more meetings than follow-up sales emails with three or fewer sentences.

Why would they reply?

In Petrified Forest National Park, 2.92% of visitors were stealing the petrified wood there.

The rangers put up signs saying 'People are stealing the petrified wood and there is going to be none left'.

Did this stop them? No, it went up to 7.92% of people stealing it!

Why? Because they said that other people were doing it which applied the social norm. And it also told them the resource was going to run out so if they better take some before they miss out!

So they updated their messaging to say 'Most people don't steal the petrified wood' and the theft went down to 1.67%.



So don't follow up with an email saying "You didn't reply to my last email", or "I know you won't reply", and all you are doing is showing most people don't reply to you, and reaffirming that they made the decision once to not reply, so why not do it again.

Which message is more compelling?



merican
Red Cross

**Not enough people
donate blood.**

Help fill the #MissingTypes.

Although clever, the message is negative and if most people don't give blood, then why would I? It doesn't single me out and give me a reason to act.



Blood and Transplant



**Become
a real
life hero**

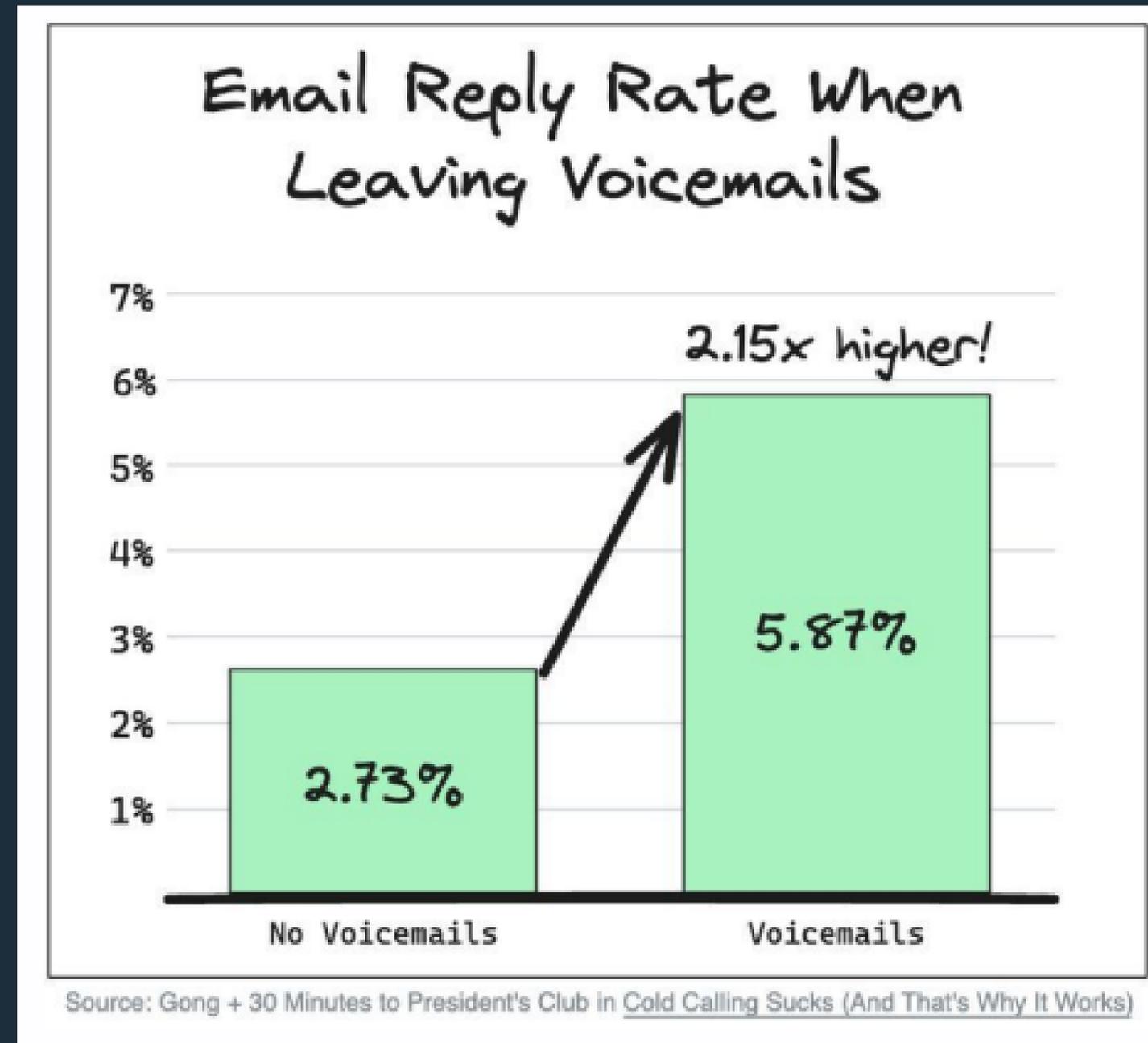
Save a life
Give blood

You have the power to alter reality
Book now and save lives at blood.co.uk

This one is much more personal and has lots of positive phrases - become a hero, save a life, you have the power etc. It also has a strong CTA!

Multi touch points

The data shows that if you follow up with an email to say “I left you a voicemail” it has a 2.15x higher response as it shows that you have made the extra effort, and that you are human and not a bot!



Personalization

There is SO much AI generated content now that people are really getting wise to sequences and “easy wins” like AI automation.

When you are doing your outreach, constantly be asking yourself “do I sound like a bot?”

Hyper personalize. Curse. Used emojis. Make typos. Do anything that shows you’re a real human!



Key Takeaways

- Emails with plain text work better than HTML images
- Make the message personal to the receiver in both the subject line and content
- Use online sources or SciLeads to do your research
- Messages should be relevant, timely, and from a person
- Limit the options given to avoid 'choice paralysis'
- Add 1 strong CTA, and put it at the end
- Encourage the perception of scarcity of your time and that everyone else is meeting you
- Keep follow ups polite and positive

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