

# Marketers

The Marketing industry has created an email monster... and marketers are paying the price.

**Read on to explore the state of email today and unlock a better future.**

## In the middle

# 1. Marketing's love affair with email

**Marketers can't get enough of email. And for good reason: email is a direct, low-cost line of communication to buyer attention.**

People spend a good chunk of their daily attention in the inbox - more than three hours per day, reading and answering work email<sup>1</sup>. The average person checks their work inbox at least 15 times a day.<sup>2</sup>

Busy executives and decision makers receive more than 4x the average.<sup>3</sup>

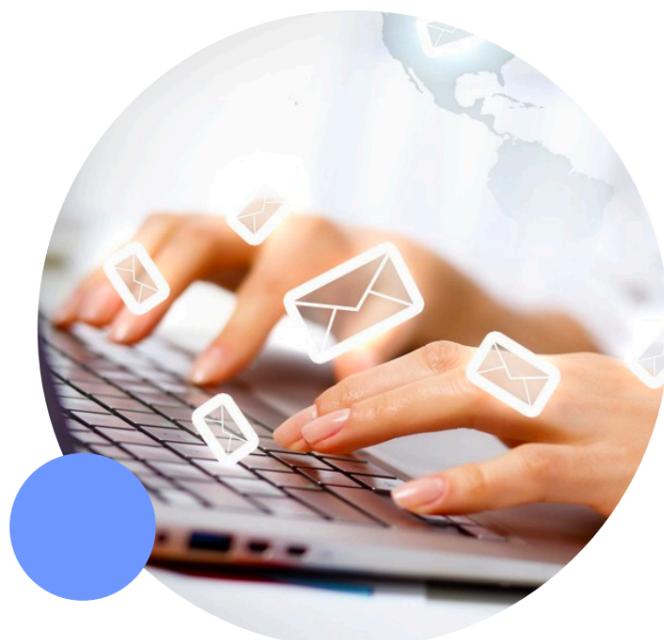
Since the beginning of the 'inbound marketing' era, around 2010, the go-to play for marketers has been:

1. Create content to earn buyer attention
2. Gate content to capture email address
3. Nurture buyers with more content and/or pass on any collected emails to Sales Development teams

Email has been primarily used to secure, nurture, and convert leads.

Though the topic is hotly debated on **podcasts and social media**, this approach is still very much alive and well.

**78% of marketers in 2020 said email is important to overall company success, up from 71% in 2019.<sup>4</sup>**



A vast majority of marketing teams depend on email.  
Consider:

**87% of B2B marketers say email is one of their top free organic distribution channels.<sup>5</sup>**

Email is **inexpensive**, costing almost nothing to send. The ROI on email is 42X: for every \$1 spent, you receive \$42 in return. A mid-sized business can run massive volume campaigns and may only spend up to \$1000/month on email marketing.

Email is **easy**, thanks to Marketing automation like HubSpot, Marketo, and Pardot. These tools deliver personalization, customization, and automation to supercharge campaigns.

Email is **easily measurable**. It's easy to measure and analyze opens, clicks, replies, conversions, subscriber growth, opt-outs, and more.



**Is it any wonder that 4 out of 5 marketers say they'd rather give up social media than email marketing?<sup>9</sup>**

**To match this demand, email tooling has grown exponentially over the past 10 years. According to G2, there are now 486 email marketing software vendors and services offering templates, automation, integrations, forms, landing pages, CRM, A/B testing, analytics, predictive analytics, etc.<sup>10</sup>**

We've all seen the overwhelming map of martech solutions. Unfortunately, this swelling ecosystem has led to an overwhelming amount of poor-quality, unsolicited, untargeted communication that often impacts the marketers themselves.



## 2. Marketers are the prime victims of email overload

With the rise of free trials, freemium products, and Product-Led Growth, anyone with a budget or title has become a target for sellers. The 'buyer' – traditionally a C-level executive or VP – has become any marketing, revops, or director with an email address.

**As many companies invest in a bottoms-up buyer journey, marketing leaders become bigger targets.**

From 2017 to 2020, Marketing budgets jumped from 9.7% of a company's revenue, to 11.3% a whopping 16% increase.<sup>12</sup> And with this greater budget and 'seat at the table' comes greater unsolicited inbound email from vendors.

**40% of buyers  
have at least  
50 unread emails  
in their inbox<sup>13</sup>**

Additionally, it's easy to get a hold of any professional email address. The same cluttered map of Martech solutions shows us data vendors like ZoomInfo, Seamless.ai, Lusha, and Clearbit. Email automation vendors like Outreach.io, Salesloft, Yesware, and MixMax. Today, anyone can buy an email address from a data provider for mere cents, load it into an automated sequence, and fire off an email campaign.

What does this look in real-life? It looks like chaotic inboxes. It looks like increased workplace anxiety. It looks like frustration on the part of marketers who both send and receive ever-increasing amounts of email.

A word cloud illustrating the impact of email overload. The words are arranged in a chaotic, overlapping manner. The most prominent words include 'noise', 'cluttered', 'years of unsubscribing', 'junk', 'onslaught of unsolicited emails', 'constant interruptions', 'overwhelm', 'so much cold outreach', 'time-consuming', 'ongoing anxiety and stress', 'hundreds of emails', and 'digitally polluted storm'. The word 'noise' is the largest and most central, with 'cluttered' and 'years of unsubscribing' also being large. The word 'junk' is written vertically. The overall composition is dense and messy, reflecting the chaotic nature of the problem.

# 3. Marketers are feeling the pain

As a marketer, you are in the middle of it all. You recognize that email marketing can be effective, but you increasingly feel the impact of a broken system.

## **A vast amount of unsolicited email forces you to sort through an astounding mess.**

You find yourself having to read, triage, categorize, filter, delete, or reply to hundreds of emails each day. You're under constant email bombardment by vendors, agencies, and consultants. The increasing clutter makes it a constant struggle to identify and handle the important, relevant emails among a sea of junk.

***“My inbox felt like a game of whack-a-mole - what can I kill off to winnow it down to the email I need to pay attention to? Things were always getting lost in the shuffle.”***

- Jenn Steele, VP of Marketing at Reprise



Alec Paul, Head of Growth at Sell Without Selling Out, captures this sentiment from the sender perspective:

***“Maybe 2% of the [cold] emails I get are truly personalized. I always let those folks know I’m not interested. But the other 98%? I mark as spam, delete, and move on. Seems insane we are putting this burden on our prospects. What a terrible buying experience.”<sup>14</sup>***

If you're not already, you should be annoyed, even angry, at having to deal with the mess. At having to invest your valuable time to triage the inbound demands of others, who are often ignorant, presumptive, and even demanding.



# Unwanted email has clear negative impact on productivity.

An email notification pings and you might think it's a long-awaited response from Susie in Legal. So you stop what you're doing and check. Nope, it's Billy from ABC potential vendor, following up for the 8th time to see if you want to speak to Sales.

**It only takes 10 seconds to read and delete the email. But did you know: It can take 23 minutes to fully refocus after a distraction.<sup>15</sup>**

It's also anxiety-inducing to deal with a never-ending flood of incoming communications.



James Winter, VP of Marketing at Spekit:

***“There's something difficult to articulate that doesn't get captured in number of emails that get filtered. I think as executives, we have an underlying anxiety about needing to keep up with an insane stream of email. While 51 gated emails doesn't necessarily sound like a large number, it is 51 fewer times that I feel micro-anxiety about some additional work that needs to be done or some issue that needs to be solved.”***

As a busy marketing professional, you're busy as heck and don't have the time-or attention-to waste. Whether at work or at home, you have priorities that you need to stay focused on. The last thing you want is a messy inbox distracting you from focusing on what matters most.

## **A torrent of bad email is crowding out the good.**

Many marketers see value in cold email and would actually like to be able to read cold outreach that's worth their time. Gaby Grinberg, CXO and Founder of Proofpoint Marketing, is a marketer who values human relationships highly; she strives to reply personally to every piece of cold sales outreach she receives. In a high-paced role and with a cluttered inbox, that's impossible.

Even if marketers understand valuable connections **can** come through cold email... they're so hammered with volume, they won't be able to give those potential opportunities any attention.



***“You’ve got to think about how much buyers have coming at them and how little bandwidth they have for this stuff.”***

Sam McKenna, Founder at #samsales

Just think of the last time you attended an event or consumed a piece of content, only to be flooded with solicitations afterwards? It's likely that you're becoming more wary of sharing your email address in any way, lest you get put into an aggressive email marketing cycle.

As a whole, marketers are increasingly turning off and tuning out to all marketing emails, good and bad. Ignoring, deleting, or even worse - opting out.



***“With Slack for internal comms and the overwhelming amount of inbound email, I had declared email bankruptcy.”***

JD Peterson, CMO at Gatsby

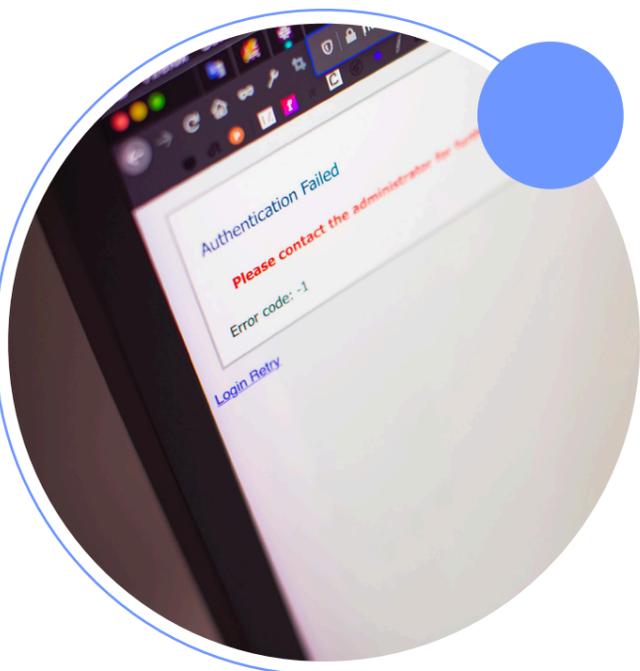
## 4. Bad email hurts brands as well

Email is more than a growth channel, it's a touchpoint for customers with your brand. So it becomes risky when low-quality or, at a minimum, lazy emails are sent out in an overly automated or scaled way.

### Marketers can sniff out a bad email from a mile away.

Though they respect well-crafted cold outreach, marketers are also the most likely to spot (and call out) poor-quality emails and bad-actor senders.

The term “pitch-slap” is well known in marketing circles. You know how it goes: “Hey [NAME], I came across your company. As a [TITLE] you probably have [PAIN POINT]. We do [SOLUTION]. Want to speak to Sales?”



Mikhail Myzgin, VP of Marketing at Slice: *“Tactics that annoy your potential customers can become a part of your brand. Therefore, how you communicate is as important as the message itself...Best case scenario is that such tactics bring some results, and most of your audience ignores you. But ignoring can turn into annoyance quickly.”<sup>16</sup>*



Gaetano Nino DiNardi, VP Growth at Aura puts it bluntly: *“If your marketing sucks, you actually annoy more people, and then that negative stigma is associated with your reputation.”<sup>17</sup>*

# 5. So what? Marketers are in the perfect position to change the system



The way email is used today is hurting marketers. Not just as recipients, but as people who depend on the channel for work success. As people who count on email to hit their goals, by delivering value to their audience. As people who distribute compelling opt-in content, remarket to previous customers that change jobs, invite prospects to co-create content (e.g., podcast), organize market research interviews, and market to existing customers.

**Marketers like you are standing at the center of today's broken system. That means you have the power to make it better – for people who send and receive email. For others like you.**



# Shift how you think

1. Establish annual marketing goals that reflect a long-term mindset. Short-term goals often incentivize bad behavior that are net-harmful in the short-term and even more harmful in the long-term.
  2. Create ruthless focus on quality of leads (vs. quantity). Consider metrics like: conversion rate to opportunity, closed/won rate, sales cycle, and CAC.
  3. Put yourself in the buyer's shoes. Would you want to receive this email?
  4. Interview your buyers to learn how they do (and don't) like to be marketed to. How do they react to cold email? To what extent does cold email influence their purchasing, relative to other marketing efforts? Where might you connect with them in a better mindset?
  5. Consider whether bad email does more harm than good. It may result in leads and revenue, but is it worth it, especially relative to other marketing alternatives?
  6. Learn more about the harm of bad email and the underlying B2B Marketing and Sales traditions that fuel it in *"The Death of the SDR: And The Birth of Buyer Centric Revenue"* by Nelson Gilliat.
  7. Explore how modern, buyer-centric marketing plays might replace the volume of bad email efforts in the *State of Demand Gen* podcast from Chris Walker, CEO of Refine Labs and a leading B2B Marketing expert.
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# Shift how you work

1. Use email for good. Structure your campaigns around: referral introductions, opt-ins, invites to co-create content (guest podcast, webinar, roundtable etc.), check-ins with buyers who spoke to Sales but didn't buy, remarketing to previous customers, etc.
2. Avoid sending any solicitations that do not include previously-given consent. Refrain from sending more than 2 emails to the same buyer. Restrain yourself from pitching immediately after a buyer engages with content.
3. Add a human-focused touch to your email marketing: For inspiration, watch three incredible sales leaders in a roundtable about *"Email Marketing in a Buyer-Centric World."*
4. Implement better work habits to create focus and minimize distraction. Check your email only a few times a day at certain times. Block time on your calendar to respond to emails and write your own.
5. Use technology to decrease distraction. Turn off email notifications. Make rigorous use of 'away' features in tools like Slack, iOS. Use *Gated*, a free solution that keeps emails from unknown senders out of your inbox.



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