



Millennials + Email:

HOW TO ENGAGE EMAIL NATIVES

WHITE PAPER



OVERVIEW

Millennials can be perplexing—even for the most connected and savvy marketer. This huge, much-hyped demographic, the babies of the Boomers, comprises roughly 50 million people born after 1980. Is this selfie-loving generation shallow—or do they just want brands to communicate with them in a genuine way? Are they lazy communicators who prefer GIFs to words—or are they hyper-informed activists? The answer might well be all of the above. And they probably are your largest group of customers. If not, they will be soon.

There has been much ado about these all-important “digital natives,” the only generation for which new technology is not something to adapt to—it’s just something that is. Email marketers would be wise to consider Millennials “email natives” as well, since a world in which

companies, co-workers and friends didn’t push send is in the distant past. If it’s a memory at all.

However, Millennials remain a bit of a “unicorn” generation to email marketers—despite having the best head start of any digital marketing channel. BrightWave, North America’s leading email marketing agency, conducted original research, surveying over 1,500 Millennials. The statistically significant results show some surprising truths about their behavior—like the fact that they love and use email, but aren’t really that into sharing it. They also affirm some of the suspicions that we couldn’t quite put our finger on before—like their expectation of personalized, one-to-one communication and good-looking mobile design. Read on to get a snapshot of Millennials and email.

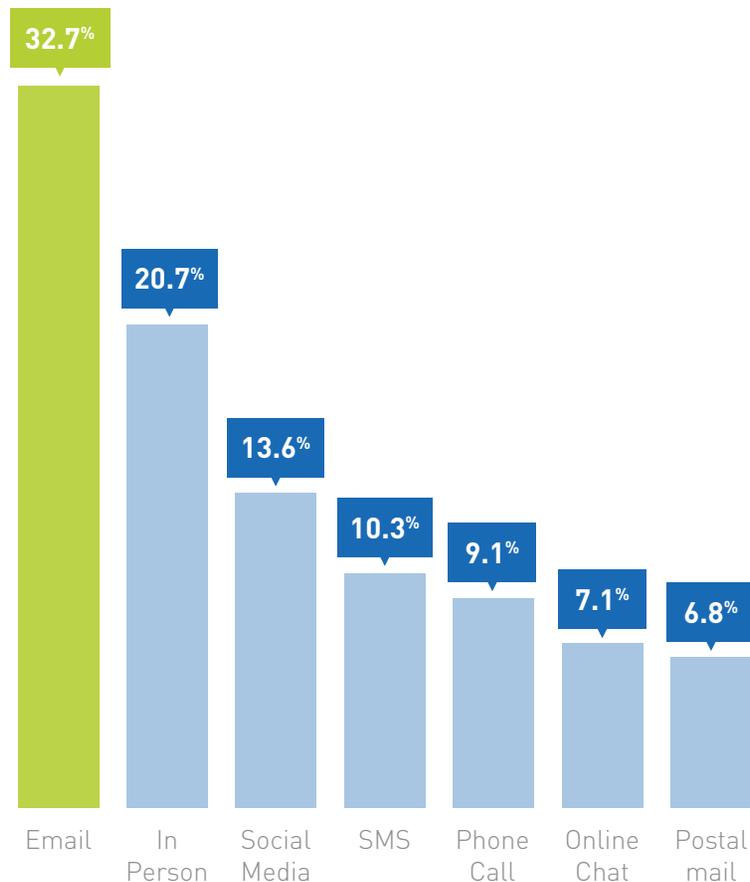
METHODOLOGY

BrightWave conducted original research, polling over 1,500 people between the ages of 18-34 via Google Consumer Surveys in April 2015 and February 2016. The statistically significant results were weighted by gender and region.



Takeaway: Millennials prefer that brands communicate with them via email. Full stop.

What is your preferred method of contact with brands you do business with or like?



When asked how they want the brands they like or do business with to get in touch, Millennials chose email—over in person interactions, social media, text messages, phone calls, online chat or postal mail. In fact, email overtook the next closest contender by over 10 points, with 32.7% of Millennials choosing the medium for contact with their most-loved brands.

This dispels some myths of Millennials being the social generation. While they may be hyper-social in their everyday lives, there seems to be a widespread sentiment that they don't always want brands in their friendspace, where they can be unwelcome intruders. In fact, in our research only 12.5% of Millennials responded positively to seeing sponsored content in their social feed.

Action Item: Put email at the center of an omnichannel approach.

Envision email as the place for one-to-one communication with your brand's advocates and champions. But make sure the same strong messages are echoed on all of your other marketing channels. We used to say, "Right message, right person, right time." Now we say, "Same message, everywhere, all the time."

Takeaway: Millennials like that they can check email whenever.

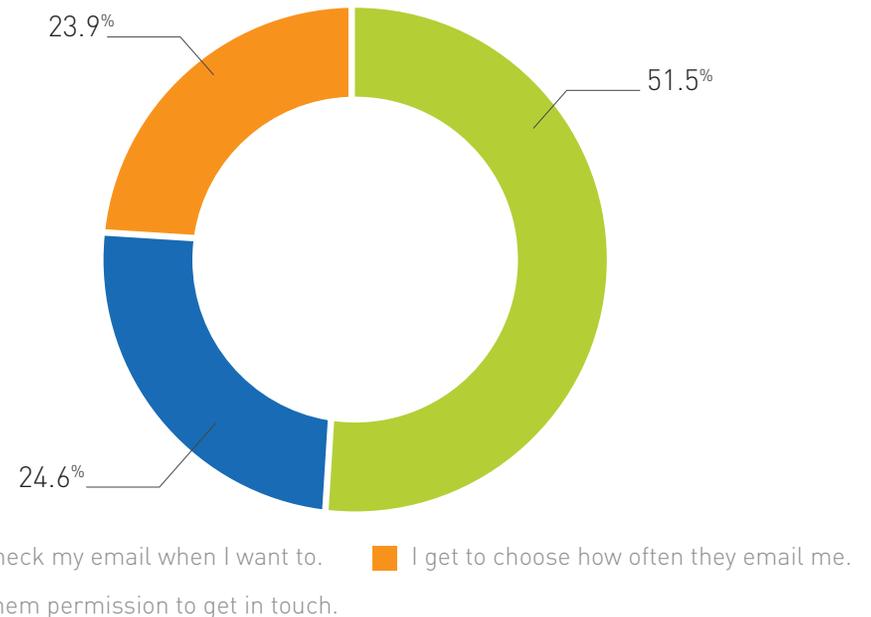
Action Item: Ditch your time of day testing.

We don't need to be obsessed with testing the perfect time of day to send an email. Millennials will open and interact with your email on their schedule—but only if there's a compelling subject line, totally relevant content and a clear call to action. Bottom line: It's less about "when" and more about "what."

Instead, make sure you're conducting tests that matter to Millennials:

- **Subject line** – Have you tried a mysterious subject line that doesn't give everything away up front?
- **Photography** – Does including your product or idea with a real person in context help your audience connect?
- **Call to Action** – Does a lower commitment CTA like "Learn More" outperform at more specific one like "Buy Now"?

I prefer for brands to communicate with me by email because:

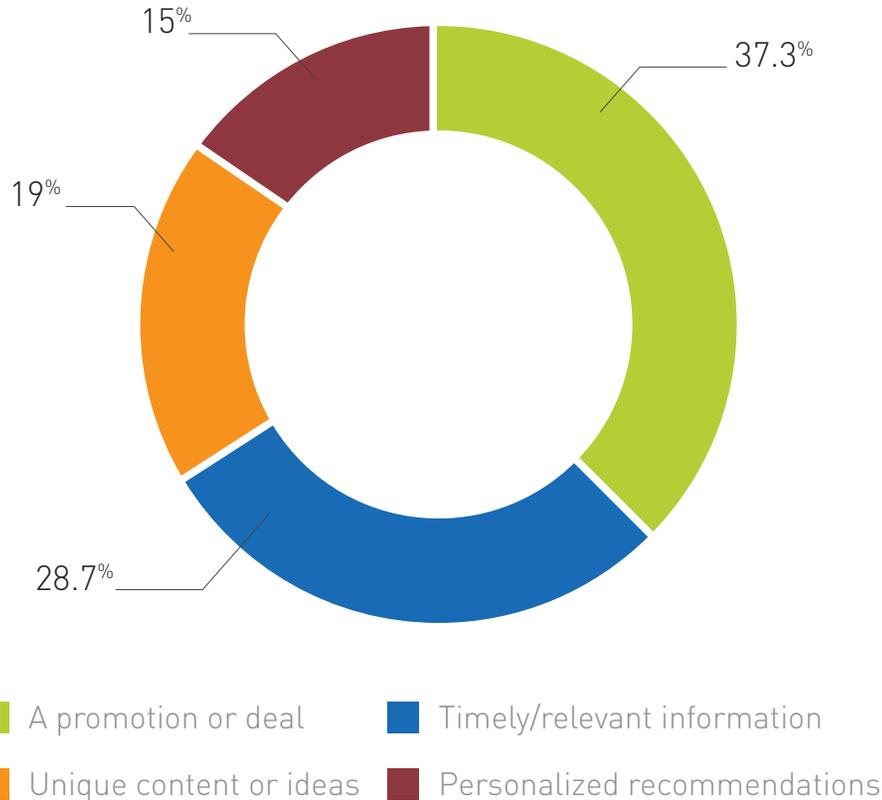


The big and obvious question about the Millennial email preference is, "Why?" According to our survey, the answer has to do with both permission and place.

The top reason that Millennials prefer email is because they can check it when they want to—waiting for a cortado at the coffee shop or half-watching a show on Netflix. They've got a pervasive "I want what I want when I want it" mindset—and email fits in very nicely. Millennials may browse through their "promotions" tab in Gmail to waste a bit of time when they welcome distraction. But they can also choose to ignore it when something more interesting pops up.

Takeaway: Millennials respond to great content.

I'm more likely to click on an email if it contains:



The good news is that once they've given a brand permission to interact, Millennials want to respond to great content; they're waiting for it. What kind of content? When it makes sense with your brand, a promotion or deal can, of course, move the needle. After that, Millennials say they want timely information, unique ideas and personalized recommendations—in that order.

Action Item: Check our engagement list.

Are your emails falling flat for your most important audience? Check this list to see how to communicate your message to Millennials:

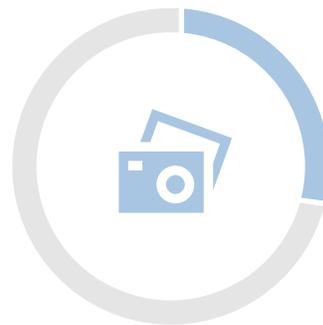
1. Is there something exclusive I can offer to make the customer feel special?
2. Is there something here that's new, that no one's ever heard before?
3. Is there something timely that pertains to what my customer needs right now?
4. What's unique in this email that no other brand can say?
5. Is there a personalized angle I can add?

Takeaway: Millennials demand that emails look good on mobile.

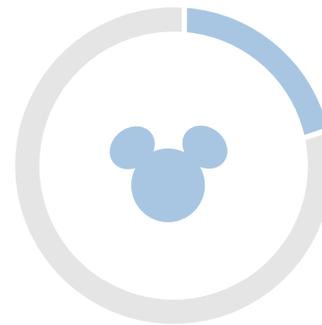
I'm more likely to interact with an email if:



41.0% It looks good on my mobile phone.



27.7% It has great photography



19.7% It has eye-catching animation



11.6% It has video or other multimedia content

It's not enough to simply get your customers to hand over their email address or even open your carefully strategized email. They've got to take action. So how do you get the elusive Millennial to click? **The number one factor is that it must look good on their phone.** Otherwise, the unsubscribe button is just a thumb-flick away.

Other factors that get the click: Great photography, eye-catching animation and video or other multi-media content—in that order.

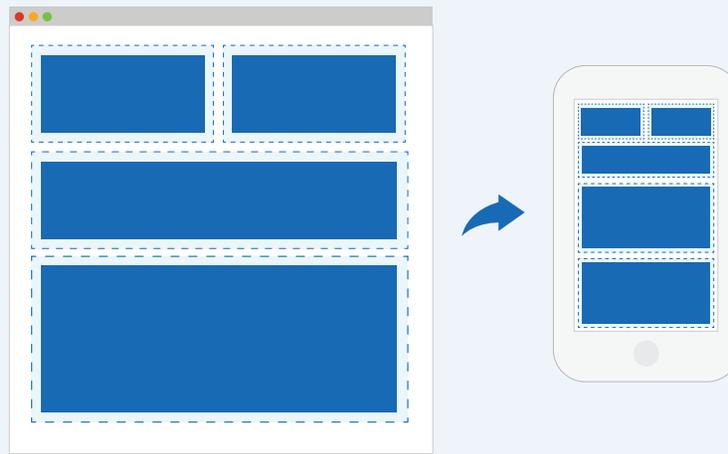
Action Item:

Know your mobile design options—then be brutally honest with yourself.

Use our little design dictionary on the following page to make an informed design decision that will please your Millennial audience on the smallest screen.

Takeaway: Millennials demand that emails look good on mobile.

Mobile Design Dictionary



Mobile-friendly/Scalable Design:

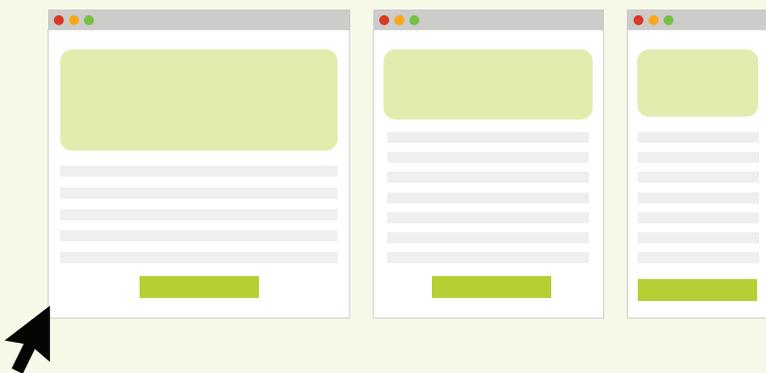
Is readable and clickable no matter what environment it is being read in: mobile, tablet or desktop. There is only one version of the email and one layout, which is typically only 320 to 550 px wide. These designs typically need the following elements:

- Touch-friendly links and buttons
- Clear CTA, preferably left-aligned
- Short, direct copy
- Increased font sizes
- Content hierarchy
- A one-column layout

Continued →

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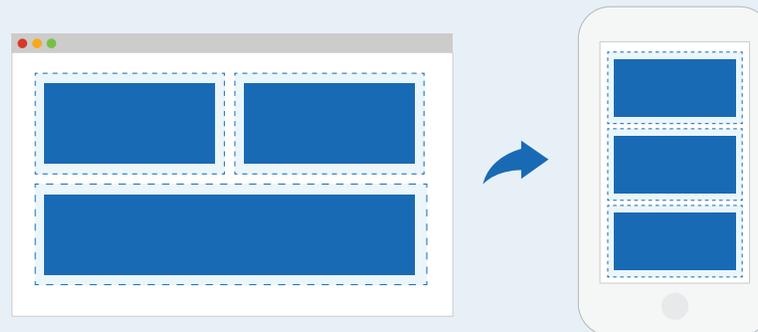
Mobile Design Dictionary



Responsive Design:

Uses a media query, a special set of CSS styles. Media queries detect the screen size of a device and then “turn on” different sets of rules based on that screen size. They do require more planning and testing than standard emails, and don’t work in all email clients.

At the time of publishing, responsive emails were not supported by iPhone & Android Gmail apps, Android & iPhone Yahoo mail apps, some Blackberry devices and some Windows phones.



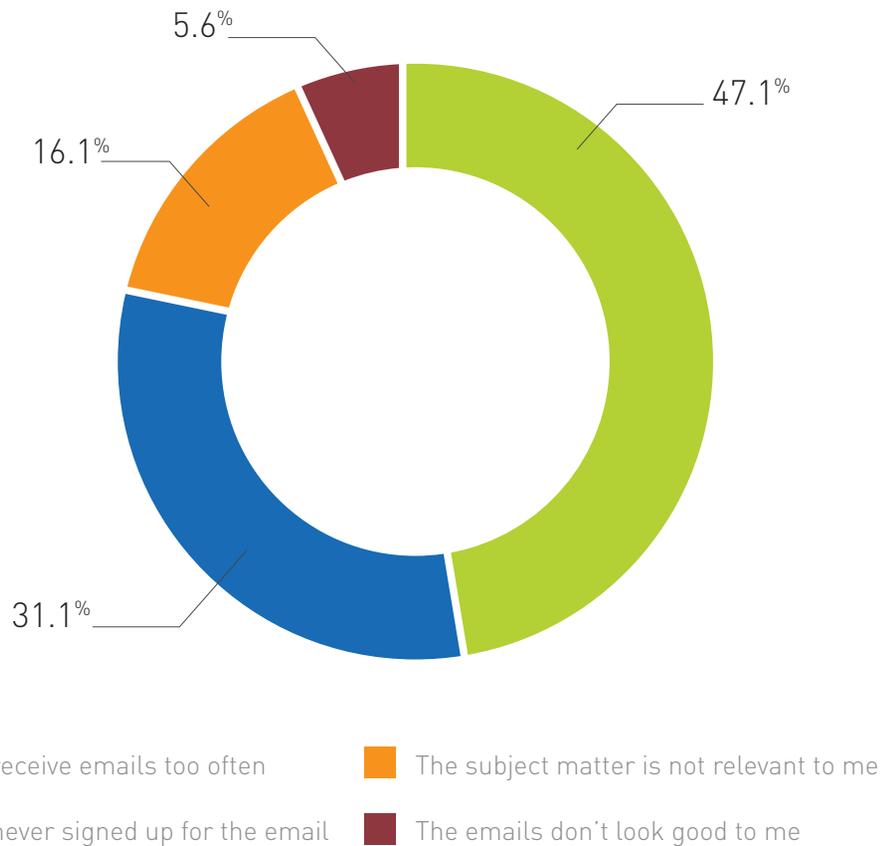
Hybrid Design:

This technique, largely a response to clients like Gmail that aren’t supported in responsive design, still has fluid tables and elements—but it doesn’t use media queries. This means support in more clients, even stubborn Outlook & Gmail. A caveat: It can get complicated when trying to apply to complex layouts because of the use of max-width CSS.

This field is still evolving—so stay tuned to industry blogs, like brightwave.com/resources, for more info.

Takeaway: Millennials don't want you to flood their inbox.

The biggest reason I unsubscribe is:



Even with brands they like or do business with, the number one reason that Millennials unsubscribe is because they receive emails too often—a whopping 47% say this is the reason they opt out of a program. This is exponentially more important than the subject matter being relevant or even the emails looking great. Frequency matters. It just does.

Another hard truth: Instead of cursing your subscribers that are jumping ship, rejoice. Having a smaller, more engaged audience is better for your deliverability in the long run—and better for your business.

Action Item: Provide a preference center to allow Millennials to “opt down.”

Millennials are all about their personal preferences. Giving them the ability to hone in on the types of communications they receive—and how often—allows them to buy into the program. Some pointers:

- Put two links near each other in your footer: One to unsubscribe and one to manage preferences. (And: have an internal plan so managing this doesn't get too onerous.)
- Integrate preference collection into your welcome series when your audience is the most engaged.
- Consider an incentive for handing over preferences, like a simple discount or giveaway.

Takeaway: Millennials don't want to share your emails. And that's okay.

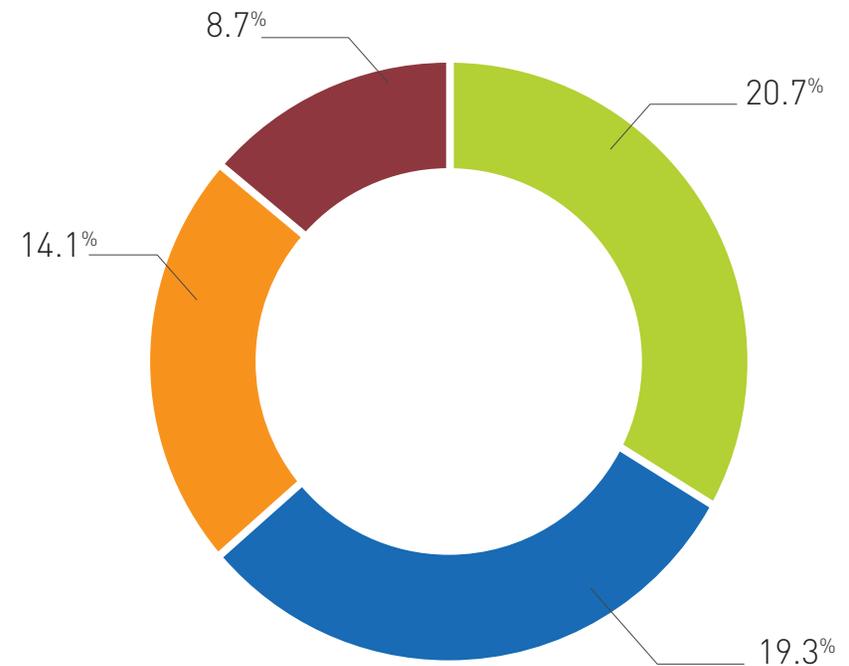
Sure, Millennials are all about sharing—the ridiculously good-looking meal they're about to demolish or their adorable kid taking a first step. On their social networks. When you provide relevant, highly personalized content to a Millennial in an email, don't be surprised when she doesn't want to share it. Only 8.7% of Millennials say that relevant, engaging content makes them want to share an email.

Action Item: Pump up personalization. Ignore your share metrics.

Here are some unique ways to make each and every Millennial think you're emailing just them—way beyond using their first name.

- Use dynamic background imagery based on their location or time of day.
- Utilize browsing history to recommend products that suit their tastes.
- Use social sign-ins to gather relevant data. Then use it.

An engaging, relevant email makes me:



- More likely to support a cause
- More likely to interact with a brand
- More likely to share with my network
- More likely to buy something from a brand

About BrightWave

BrightWave is North America's leading email marketing agency. The award-winning firm specializes in elevating email marketing and eCRM programs that drive revenue, cut costs and build relationships.

Headquartered in Atlanta, GA, BrightWave works with a blue chip client roster, including Aflac, Chick-fil-A, Equifax, MattressFirm, Mizuno and Phillips 66. For more information, visit brightwave.com.

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