



## INBOX



Congrats on your product launch

You and your team have really accomplished..



## Email Subject Lines That Actually Work

115 Million Emails Reveal We're All Doing It Wrong



Just tried your line

I just tried calling you and left a voicemail. Ple..



Openplus Call Summary

Great speaking with you today, Mary. I'm glad..



Derek - Hello and a favor

Hope you're doing well! We should catch up..

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## PREFACE

Emails can be the fastest way to win new business — and the fastest way to lose it.

It all starts with the subject line you choose.

People receive [116 business emails](#) every day, so you need to pick your words wisely if you want to get their attention. After all, you're asking to insert yourself into their time, which is precious split between replying to emails they're accountable for, sitting in meetings, and managing projects, people and priorities.

It's no small ask.

The irony is that so many sources of content promising best practices for email subject lines are actually preaching the wrong strategies. These tactics have become the most used and the most ineffective at the same time. Once released, they were applied by the sales mainstream, which made them quickly hackneyed and easily discernible as sales outreach. Most often, these emails are deleted without ever being opened.

### HERE'S WHAT WE'VE FOUND:

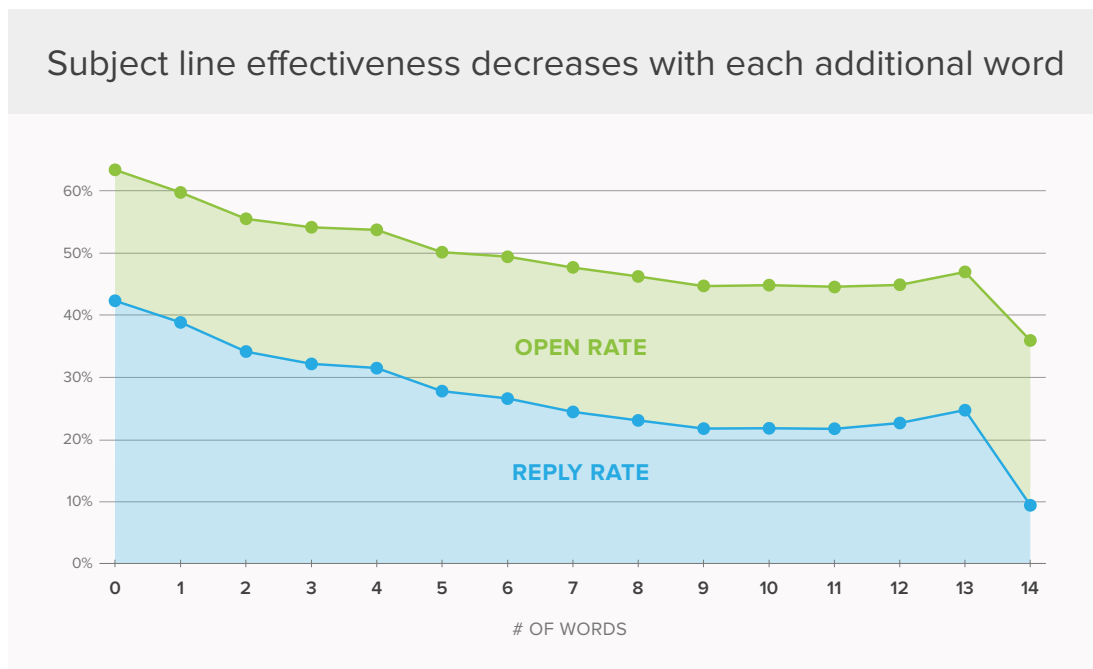
Yesware data scientists analyzed over one hundred million tracked emails over a full year period from 2015 to 2016 to identify which email subject line strategies work and which don't. We looked specifically at most and least used words and formats in comparison to most and least effective.

To benchmark the findings below, keep in mind that the average open rate over the past year has been 51.9%, with an average reply rate of 29.8%. We also recommend that you A/B test your subject lines to see how the research we've done relates to your own audience.



## FINDING # 1: Could blank subject lines be an untapped email advantage?

After years of email marketing and hundreds of articles explaining which words to use in your subject lines to get the most opens, this one came as a real shocker: The best performing subject line is a blank one? See the chart below.



However, this finding comes with a big caveat. Because there are incredibly few people using this subject line tactic, we can't say for sure that no subject line is ultimately the best one. But is it worth testing for yourself? Sure.

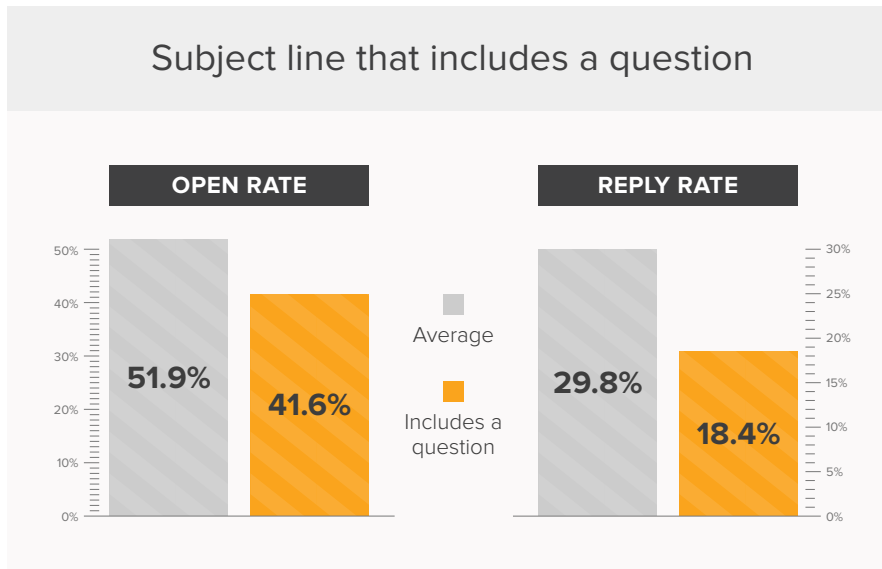
### WHAT WE THINK IS GOING ON HERE:

One possible reason why blank subject lines could garner high open rates is because they break from the norm and trigger curiosity, which motivates someone to stop and open your email. This could also explain why subject lines with fewer words perform better than lengthier ones.

Again, we can't say for sure if this tactic will work for you, but you can always A/B test your subject lines to see what works for your audience ([more on A/B testing here](#)).

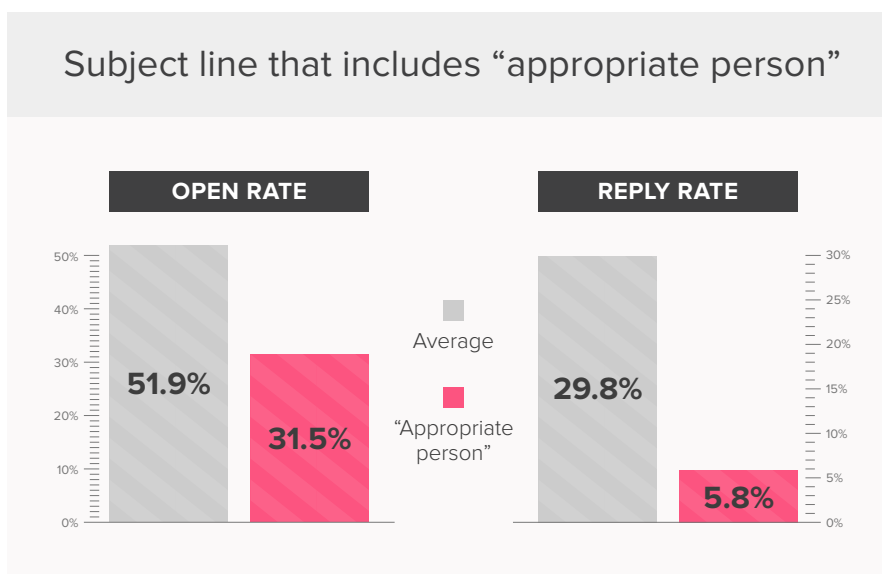


## FINDING # 2: Subject lines framed as questions get fewer opens and replies.



Asking a question in an email subject line is a common tactic salespeople (and marketers) use to prompt someone to reply. They do it because many blogs tout it as a best practice that delivers [higher open rates](#).

But it doesn't work.

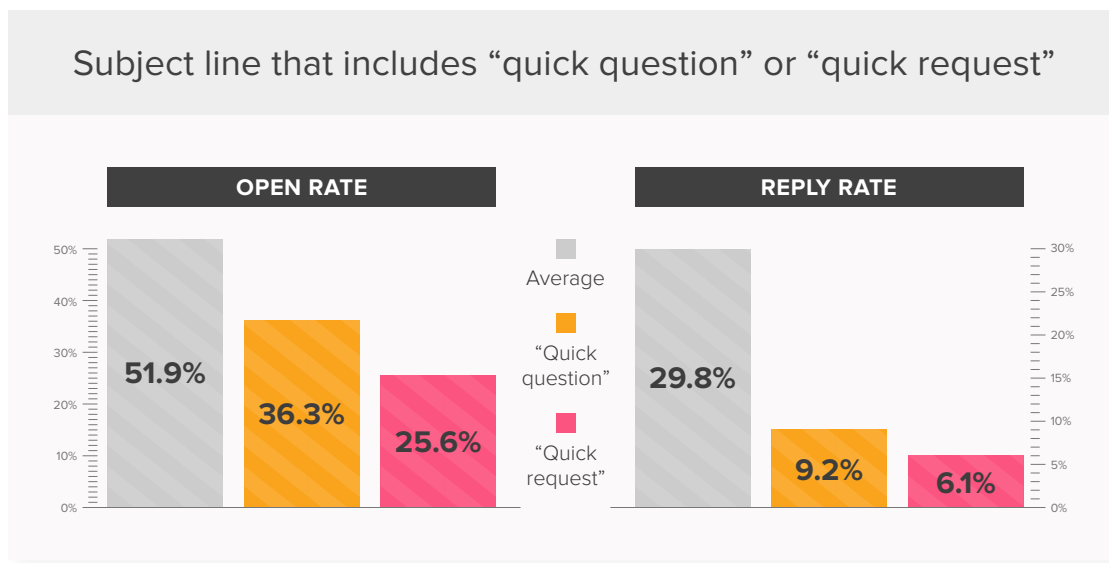


It's also time to retire the "Are you the appropriate person?" subject line. Our analysis has revealed that the phrase "appropriate person" has a reply rate **six times lower than the average**, and yet it is one of the top ten most used 2-word phrases in outgoing email subject lines.



If you want to know if they're the appropriate person, [do some research](#). If it's your tactic to get a referral to who you know is the right person, it's the wrong one and doesn't get the replies you're looking for.

Like asking direct questions, we've found that telling your prospect you have a question is also an ineffective subject line strategy. The phrase "quick question" is simultaneously a top 10 most used and least effective email subject line, along with "quick request."



### WHAT'S GOING ON? HERE'S OUR BEST GUESS:

Everyone copes with being crazy busy and overwhelmed by email in the same basic way: [scan and triage](#). We make split second decisions to open, delete, or save for later.

The problem with asking any kind of question in a subject line is that you put the onus on the reader to think and respond. That extra effort in the context of split-second decisions is what makes it less likely to get your message opened.

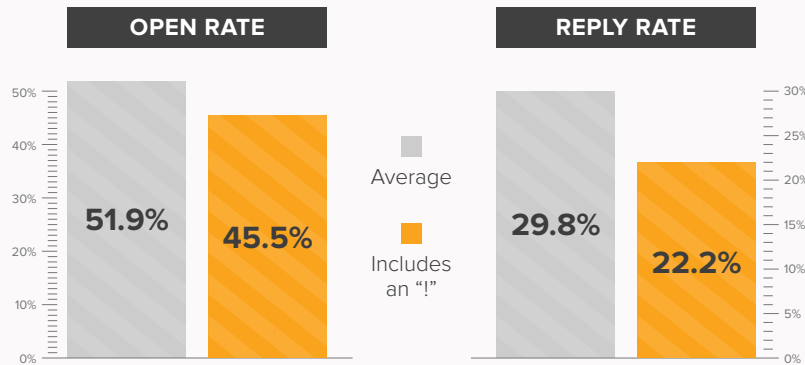
**You're essentially asking them to do more work.** The easier alternative is simply to ignore.

No matter how small your request or quick your question, you can't jump to an ask before delivering value.



## FINDING # 3: Those exclamation points are hurting you.

### Subject line that includes an exclamation point



You may think that exclamation point in your subject line is catching your prospect's attention, but it's not.

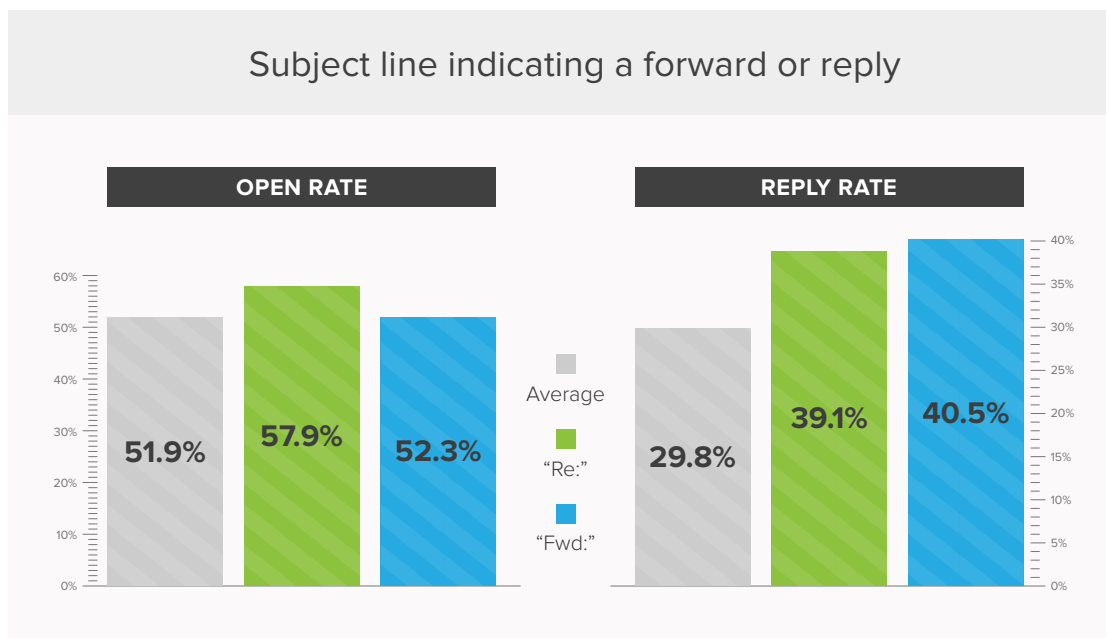
#### HERE'S THE DEAL:

Chances are that email didn't even make it to their inbox in the first place. Research shows that exclamation points in subject lines lead to lower than average open rates because this type of punctuation is actually a [trigger for spam filters](#).



## FINDING # 4: Subject lines that indicate a forward (“Fwd:”) or reply (“Re:”) get more opens.

Based on our research, it looks like your email recipients are more likely to open an email when they’ve already had a conversation with the person than a cold email from a stranger.



### WHY IT'S THE CASE:

Both “Fwd:” and “Re:” hint to the recipient that they have had a prior conversation with the sender.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT:

If you’re following up a prior email that you’ve sent to a prospect, reply as a thread. You can use tools like [Mail Merge](#) to automate an [entire drip campaign](#) to a prospect and set up secondary stages to send as a thread with the message history included.

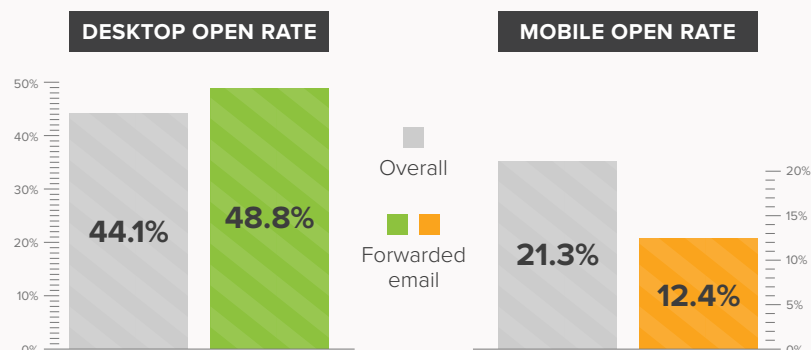
**Note:** Don’t use “Re:” if your email isn’t part of a thread or “Fwd:” if you aren’t truly forwarding an email. Subject line trickery might get you the open, but it will lose you the reply.





## FINDING # 5: People are less likely to read forwarded emails on their phones.

Forwarded emails opened on desktop vs. mobile



vs.



Yesware's research shows that even though forwarded emails ultimately get higher than average reply rates, their mobile opens are much lower than average.

So while many emails are opened and answered directly on mobile, or opened on mobile and later replied to by desktop, people wait to deal with forwarded emails until they're on desktop.

### WHY IT'S THE CASE:

If you've ever opened a forwarded email on your smartphone, this probably doesn't surprise you.

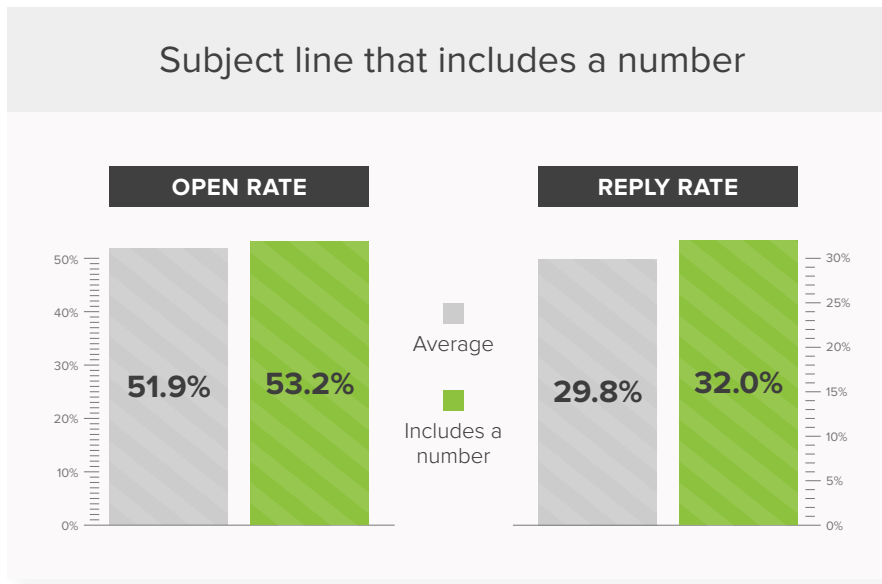
By default, email providers like the iPhone Mail app indent forwarded emails to make it easier for you to identify each individual message. But what happens is it actually makes the reading process more difficult, especially when you're reading on a small screen. A long string of forwards or replies appears choppy and hard to follow.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT:

If you're forwarding an email — especially one with an attachment — try to avoid sending it during [peak mobile hours](#) for your recipient's local time (typically 6-8AM and 6-8PM). If you do, you risk being read later and getting caught lower down in their inbox.



## FINDING # 6: Subject lines that include numbers have higher than average open and reply rates.



If you're sending a sales email, using a number is your power of persuasion.

### WHAT WE THINK IS GOING ON HERE:

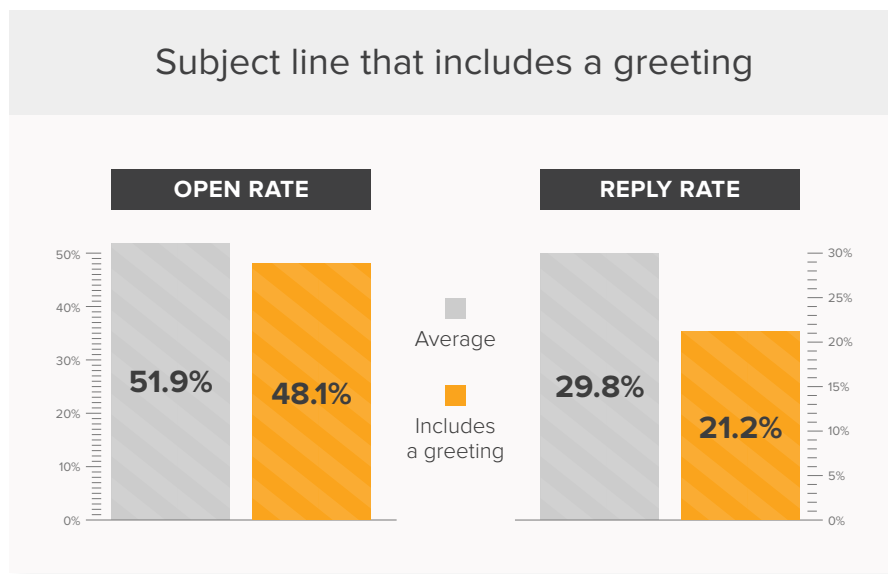
Hard numbers > general descriptions when it comes to a prospecting email; the first builds credibility; the second damages it.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT:

If you typically mention a case study in your prospecting email, take the metric of success that your customer achieved, and put that in your subject line. (Ex: "175 Hrs/Month Back")



## FINDING # 7: Personal greetings don't work anymore.



Yesware's analysis found that subject lines containing a greeting (i.e. hi, hey, etc.) had an open rate roughly 3% lower than the overall average.

### WHAT IT MEANS:

While people continue to use greetings and text fields to individualize emails to their recipients, they're no longer effective. Email recipients have caught on. They know from your seemingly personal subject line that it's really a mass email.

So many salespeople use this tactic that every email user has, at one point back in the day, been duped by a cold email with a personal greeting in the subject line. It could be that our brain now recognizes these subject lines as an [early warning sign](#) of a sales email, and we delete the emails to avoid that first time we expected a personal email and were wrong.

### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT:

If you're using automated personalization tactics, save them for the body of your email and used more advanced fields than the ones than what we've all come to expect, like First Name, Company Name, and Job Title. Try using a custom sentence so you can easily insert full, personalized sentences into templated messaging.

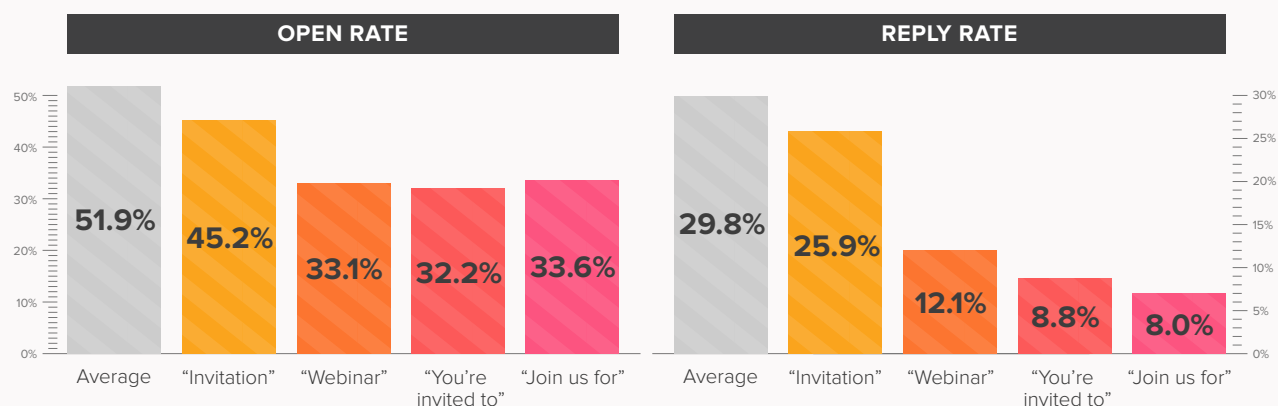
[Here's a spreadsheet to use for inserting custom fields into your email.](#) Use a tool like [Mail Merge](#) to insert the custom fields.



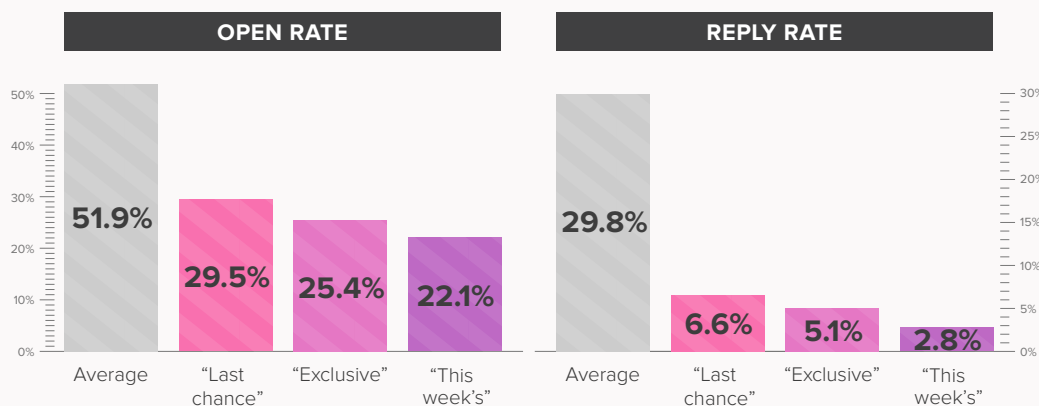
## FINDING # 8: No, they don't want to join that webinar.

The language typically used to invite prospects (and customers) to events is also overused, and therefore doesn't strike the right chord of persuasion. Neither does the language used to drive home exclusivity or [incite urgency](#)...

### Subject line including an invitation to an event



### Subject line used to drive exclusivity or incite urgency



#### WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT:

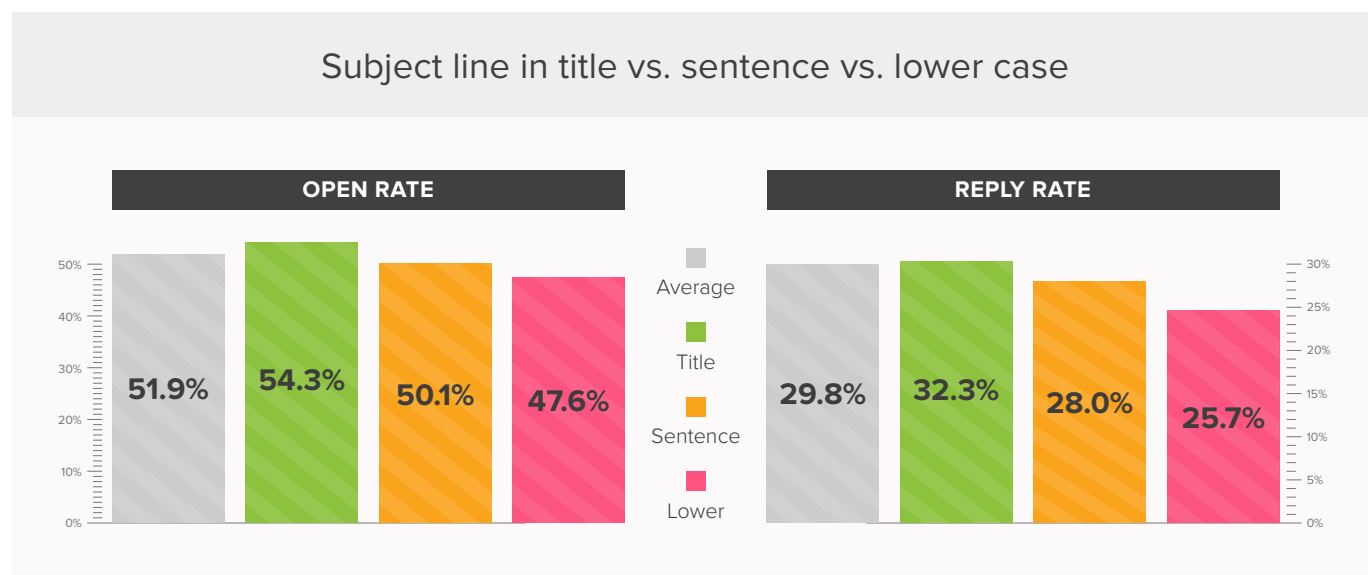
Instead of just telling them they're invited, show them why they should attend. For example, the folks over at [InsightSquared](#) use the phrase "[Day of week] Lunch" as a subject line to ask their prospect to participate in a demo of their product.



## FINDING # 9: Title Case is the way to go.

While the most popular casing for the emails we tracked was sentence case, the most effective case was title case.

**A refresher:** This Is Title Case. | This is sentence case. | this is lowercase.



### WHY IT'S THE CASE:

We respect people who have authority. Even something as small as using title case instead of sentence or lowercase in an email subject line is an [authority badge](#) for the sender.

It's like showing up to an interview in a suit instead of a pair of shorts.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Yesware data scientists reviewed 115,886,636 sent emails over a 365-day period, from April 2015 to April 2016, and spliced the data according to opens and replies across desktop, mobile, and all devices.



# FIND OUT WHICH OF YOUR SUBJECT LINES ARE WORKING AND WHICH ARE WEAK

In the name of always selling smarter.

## YESWARE FOR CONTRIBUTORS

- Email tracking (including opens, clicks, and page-by-page view time on attachments)
- Time-saving tools like email templates, drip campaigns, and a CRM sidebar for inboxes
- Salesforce integration auto-syncs emails, meetings, and calls to Salesforce

START SENDING AND TRACKING YOUR BEST SUBJECT LINES

*(Free trial includes access to Mail Merge, Email Templates, and more)*

## YESWARE FOR MANAGERS

- A prescriptive platform that gives you insights you can act on
- Metrics and reporting you need to coach at your best
- Dashboards that pinpoint the cause of high and low performance to help you strategize

TELL ME MORE