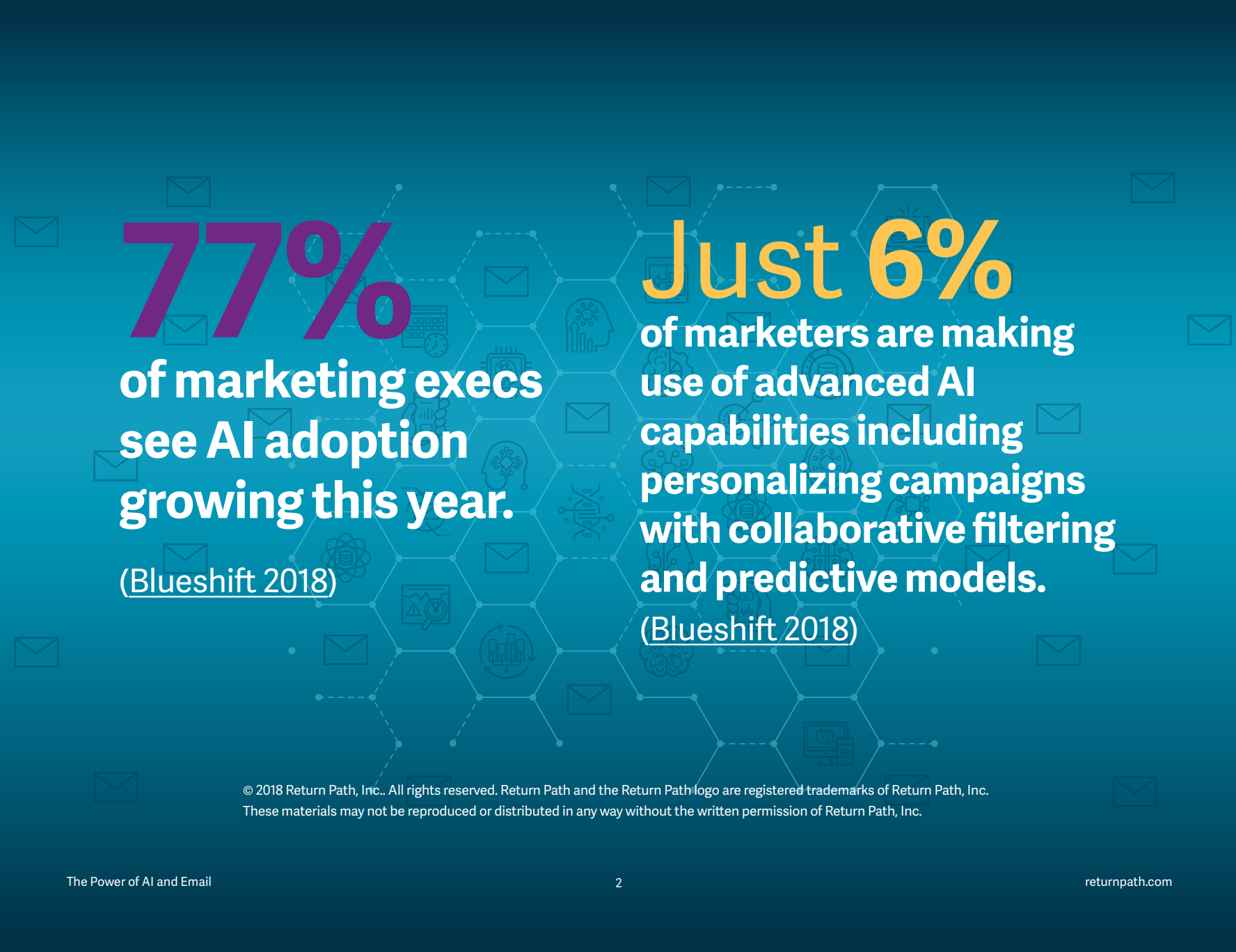


Unlocking email's untapped potential





77%
of marketing execs
see AI adoption
growing this year.

(Blueshift 2018)

Just 6%
of marketers are making
use of advanced AI
capabilities including
personalizing campaigns
with collaborative filtering
and predictive models.

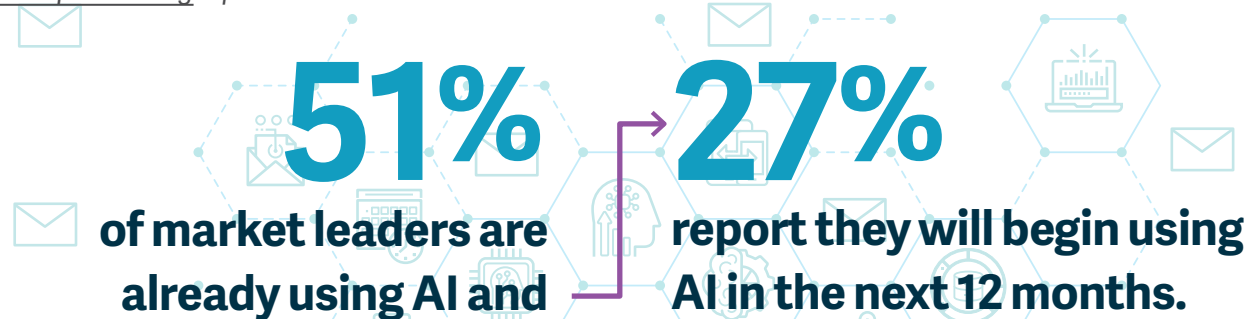
(Blueshift 2018)

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Introduction



Best in class marketers are embracing artificial intelligence (AI). According to Salesforce's State of Marketing report:



The report also found that high performers were **3.1 times** more likely to use AI extensively compared to under-performers.

Marketers who are adopting AI today stand to be the winners of tomorrow. But the concept of AI can be intimidating, so we've brought the idea to life with some examples of how it can transform your email marketing program.

What is AI?



When we think about AI, we often envision a future that isn't quite reality yet—like sentient robots driving us to work in flying cars. But in reality, AI is already alive and well among us. From spam filters to voice assistants, AI is an important part of everyday life, even if it doesn't look like a protocol droid.

Ask ten people what AI is and you'll likely get ten different definitions. You'll hear terms like "machine learning" or "deep learning." Concepts like "natural language processing," "Bayes models," and "neural networks" will also crop up. These are all technologies that collectively encompass AI.

The truth is, AI is simply a collection of technologies used to mimic human behaviors and thought processes. To make this all possible, AI requires massive amounts of data to learn and return accurate results.



97%

**of marketers across
business verticals are
confident that AI can
improve the customer
experience.**

Senders using AI delivered

41%

**more revenue than
those embracing manual
personalization.**



(The Relevancy Group)

What can AI do for email marketers?



AI allows marketers to leverage technology, rather than manpower, to harness the power of data to build stronger subscriber relationship. AI can take over the heavy lifting on data analysis and provide marketers with quicker and more accurate data-driven insights. These insights will not only help marketers reduce or prevent deliverability issues, but also give them the ability to build a better, adaptive program for their subscribers.

Following are just a few of the many ways AI can help marketers take their email program to the next level.



Identify and solve problems

Email deliverability is complicated, with many different factors influencing the ultimate result. Marketers often struggle to not only monitor their KPIs, but to recognize when problems arise. And once a problem is identified, it can take a great deal of time and effort to discover the root cause, figure out how to fix it, and implement the resolution.

AI technologies have the potential to identify problems, suggest solutions, and execute those solutions before any negative impact occurs. With this predictive analysis and proactive resolution, marketers will spend less time identifying and fixing problems and more time focusing on building an engaging program for their subscribers.



Personalize email content

Most email marketers have an extensive subscriber base, comprised of thousands of individual people. It would take an absurd amount of time and manpower to build a custom email experience for each user, so marketers have to create a limited number of emails that will (hopefully) resonate with the majority of their subscribers. Many marketers segment their lists and build targeted campaigns for each segment, but even this requires significant resources and provides only a broadly “custom” experience at the individual level.

With AI, marketers will leverage technology to build targeted campaigns for each subscriber, by analyzing vast amounts of data—ultimately leading to better performance. Beyond simple tactics like personalized greetings, marketers will be able to customize the content of the message to include offers that will resonate with each subscriber, based on past interactions and other deep insights.

What can AI do for email marketers? *(continued)*



Optimize timing and frequency

Sending the right amount of emails requires a delicate balance: send too few emails and you may lose out on opportunities to make a sale; send too many and you risk overwhelming subscribers, causing them to unsubscribe or complain about your emails. With so much data and so many signals impacting these two elements, it would be nearly impossible to manually identify the best timing and cadence for each email subscriber.

By incorporating historical data on when subscribers have interacted with emails, AI powered technology can identify optimal sending times when subscribers are most likely to open and interact with emails. This historical analysis can also be applied to frequency, looking at how subscriber interactions changed due to an increase or decrease in sending frequency.



Monitor subscriber engagement

Most marketers are able to analyze their overall subscriber engagement by monitoring things like read rates and complaint rates, but this doesn't provide insight into how each customer is engaging with every campaign. Without insight into the actions of each subscriber, marketers have no way of knowing when individual subscribers may be losing interest and at risk of unsubscribing from the program.

Using AI, marketers will be able to closely monitor subscriber interactions throughout the customer lifecycle. This technology can provide marketers with a better understanding of how individual subscribers view their programs and how engaged they are. It could also provide insight into which campaigns and offers are preferred by each subscriber, identify the most valuable and loyal relationships on your subscriber list, and predict when customers who are unengaged may unsubscribe.

What impact will AI have?



AI technology for email is still in its infancy, so predicting its impact on email marketing is a challenge. To get an idea on the impact AI will have on the future of email marketing, we asked some experts for their take.



"AI has already started to change email. It has changed the way we interact with email, what we see (and what we don't see), and what marketers send. I think we will see these trends continue to grow, making each person's email experience extremely personalized to the individual. In the future, I envision that even if two people subscribe to the same email program they could have vastly different email experiences because of personalization."

—**Lauren McCombs**
Manager, Data Science, Return Path



"AI's impact on email is only starting to be felt. AI's biggest impacts will be first on its ability to drive truly personal experiences for consumers. Mailbox providers will continue to improve their filtering and their ability to highlight messages that are most likely to be valuable to their customers. Brands will be able to create truly personal customer experiences at scale, making sure each customer is contacted with offers relevant to them in a voice and frequency that is tailored to that customer. Removing some of the manual pieces from both of these processes will allow all of us to spend more time on creativity and on strategy and to focus our time on creation instead of just execution."

—**Robert Barclay**
Senior Technical Fellow, Return Path

Learn more about Return Path



Return Path uses our unparalleled data and advanced analytics capabilities to work to solve the problems email marketers face every day. Powered by [EmailDNA](#), our solutions are built to improve your email marketing and increase ROI.



Visit our website. There's no better place to find out about Return Path! Browse our resource library, check out our customer success stories, and learn more about our products and services at returnpath.com.



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