

inside the buyer's brain

# standing out in the inbox

▶ the neuroscience of  
selling with video email



# avoiding the dreaded delete button

Email is alive and well. Despite the boom in business communication platforms promising to replace it, email remains a necessity in the B2B tech stack.

Business leaders and decision-makers receive hundreds of emails every day. They're constantly wading through an inbox full of requests from co-workers, partners, sellers, and marketers, all vying for their attention.

The most urgent and intriguing messages get a response. The majority end up in the trash.

For sales reps who rely on email to pitch their solutions, the sheer volume of messages traveling through the inbox every day means finding more creative ways to stand out and get decision-makers' attention. Given that so many emails are created using just text and images, one way to stand out might be through custom recorded videos.

Custom recorded videos are videos that you record yourself and email to your prospects or customers—either on a one-to-one or one-to-many basis.

Analysts like Forrester predict these kinds of asynchronous video messages will become essential for salespeople in the future. But, while nearly half of sellers have started using video emails, it's still a relatively new approach.

Outside of anecdotal evidence about the benefits of custom recorded video, there hasn't been any rigorous research on its effectiveness...until now.

Does video really help your message stand out? Does the brain react better to video-based emails compared to text? How does video affect people's attention, memory, and motivation to act on the information received?

The purpose of this report is to answer such questions. Welcome to the age of video-based emails.



**Dr. Carmen Simon**

Cognitive Neuroscientist,  
B2B DecisionLabs  
Chief Science Officer,  
Corporate Visions



# how do sellers use *video*?

Custom recorded videos are becoming a popular way for sellers to reach remote audiences with personalized messages. And they generally don't require much video editing knowledge or training to use.

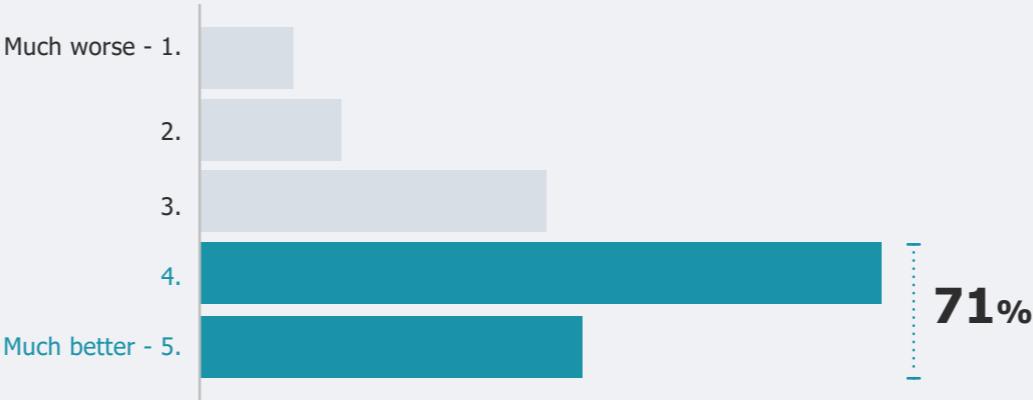
Even so, most sellers still aren't using them.

According to Vidyard's State of Virtual Selling survey of over 500 B2B sellers, **less than half (49 percent) said they're using custom videos in their sales process.**

Of the sellers who use custom recorded videos, 70 percent say that video emails produce more opens, clicks, and responses than text emails. But their responses also indicate there's room for improvement.

	How sellers use custom recorded videos:	Which kinds of videos get positive results:	Variation
▶ Follow-up to initial outreach	63%	31%	-54%
▶ Cold prospecting or first outreach	59%	27%	-51%
▶ Product or solution demos	54%	31%	-43%
▶ Post meeting follow-up	35%	21%	-40%

**How do emails with custom recorded videos perform compared to text-based emails in terms of producing the results you desire (e.g., opens, clicks, and responses)?**



**Over 70%** of sellers who use custom recorded videos say they perform better at producing opens, clicks, and responses than text-based emails.

# studying the impact of *video email*

Understanding how sellers say they use video is interesting, but surveys don't reflect buyers' reactions to video email from a scientific perspective.

To observe how buyers' brains react to video versus text email messages, 39 B2B professionals from a variety of industries participated in three-phased neuroscience study (described on the following pages).

Every participant wore the following neuroscience equipment while they interacted with the content in each phase:

- **EEG** (electroencephalogram) cap for recording brain waves
- **ECG** (electrocardiogram) for recording heart rate
- **GSR** (galvanic skin response) for measuring skin conductivity
- **Eye tracking** for recording the gaze and where the eyes fixate

**EEG**

(electroencephalogram)

**ECG cable**

(electrocardiogram)

**Eye tracking**

**GSR**

(galvanic skin response)



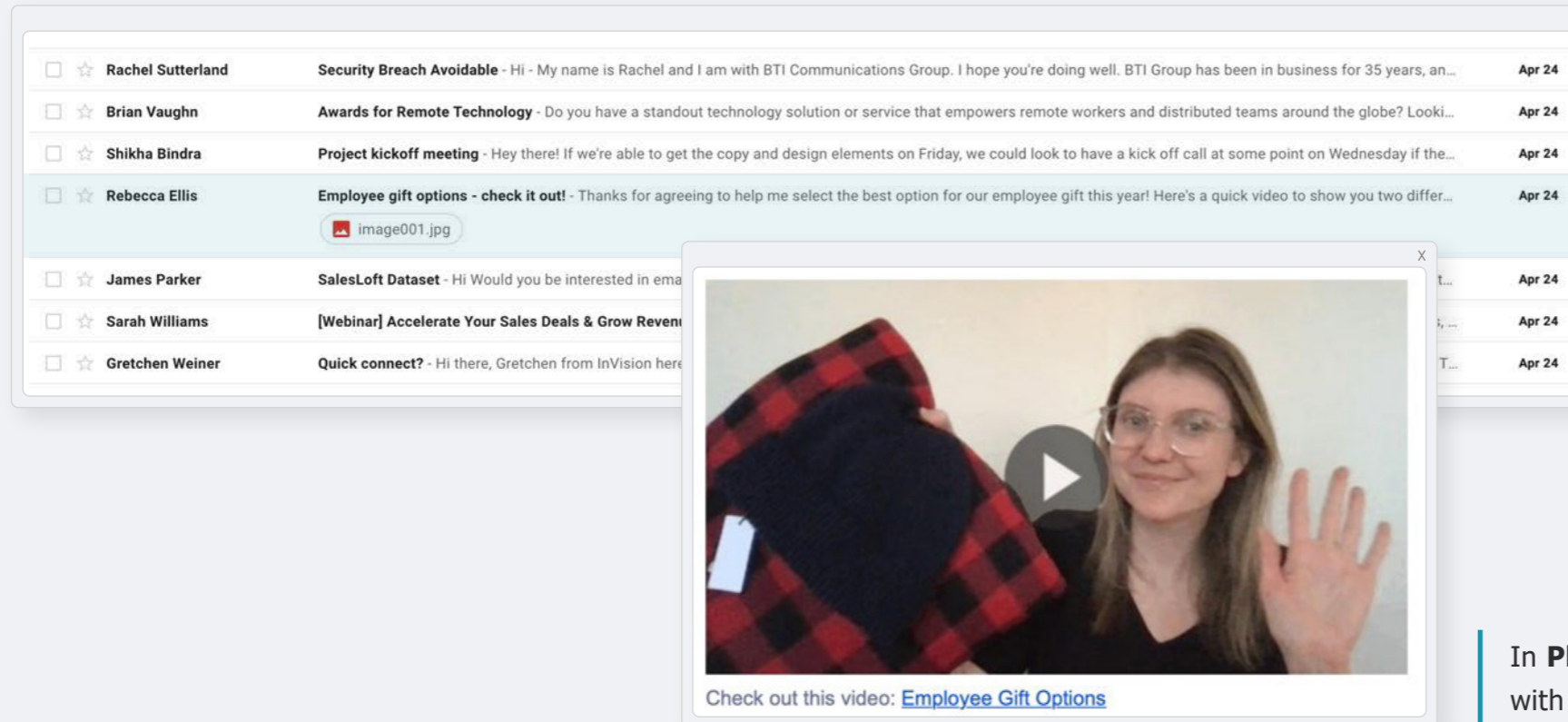
## phase 1: testing video in the *inbox*

In Phase 1 of the study, participants viewed an email inbox with seven unread emails. The first three and last three emails represented typical business emails, delivered in text format.

The fourth email was an internal email from a co-worker that included a one-minute video. The co-worker in the video asked the participant to consider two corporate gifting options.

Researchers randomized the order of the first and last three text emails. But the video email remained in the fourth position throughout the experiment.

The purpose of Phase 1 was to mimic a realistic email inbox and see what happens in the business brain when it transitions from regular text-based emails to a video email and then back to text emails.



In **Phase 1**, participants viewed an inbox with six text emails and one video email.

## phase 2:

# text vs. video email

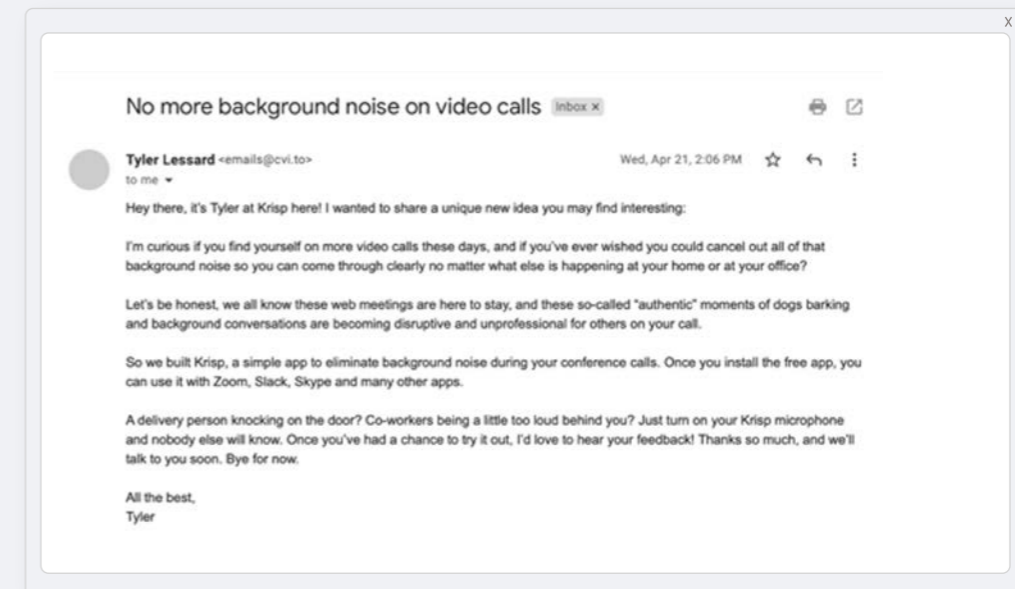
In Phase 2, participants viewed a text email and a video email that contained the same sales pitch.

The voiceover in the video contained the exact same words as the text email and showed a shared screen, pictures, animation, and sound effects. Both were sales emails pitching a software application called Krisp, which helps reduce background noise during video calls.

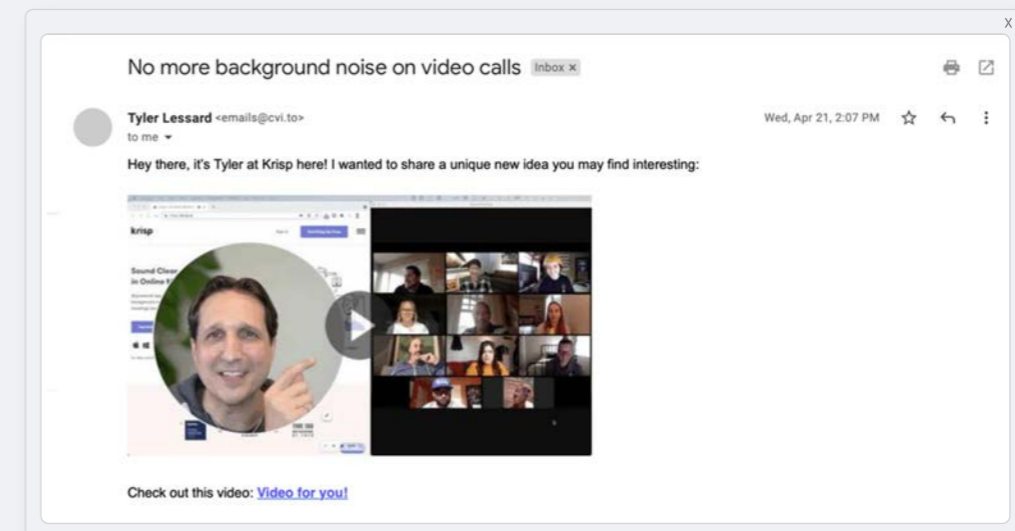
Nineteen participants viewed the text email first, and 18 viewed the video email first.

The purpose of Phase 2 was to observe and compare how text and video messages both impact participants' attention, emotional responses, memories, and motivation to act.

## Phase 2 text email



## Phase 2 video email



In **Phase 2**, participants viewed two emails that delivered the same script in two different ways.

## phase 3: setting the *context* for email

In Phase 3, participants viewed four different pieces of content online:

1. A satirical video excerpt from a popular television show.
2. A text excerpt from a widely acclaimed piece of literature.
3. A video of someone stirring tea leaves in hot water.
4. A text excerpt of historical facts regarding the timeline for building Stonehenge.

The purpose of Phase 3 was to compare cognitive and affective processing of video and text content outside of an email environment with the video and text emails from other phases.



Satirical video

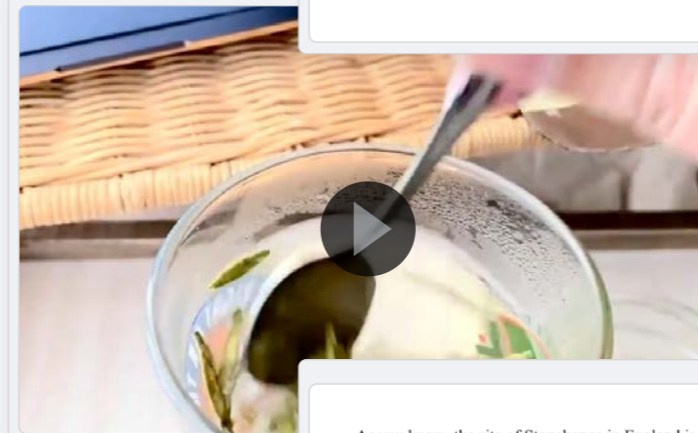
I never believed in Santa Claus. None of us kids did. Mom and Dad refused to let us. They couldn't afford expensive presents and they didn't want us to think we weren't as good as other kids who, on Christmas morning, found all sorts of fancy toys under the tree that were supposedly left by Santa Claus. Dad had lost his job at the gypsum, and when Christmas came that year, we had no money at all. On Christmas Eve, Dad took each one of us kids out into the desert night one by one and asked us to pick out our favorite star.

I pointed to what I thought was a star, but Dad told me it was Venus. He explained that planets glowed because reflected light was constant, and stars twinkled because their light pulsed. I said I liked it anyway and he told me that since it was Christmas, I could have a planet if I wanted. And he gave me Venus.

Venus didn't have any moons or satellites or even a magnetic field, but it did have an atmosphere sort of similar to Earth's, except it was super hot - about 500 degrees or more. So Dad said that when the sun starts to burn out and Earth turns cold, everyone might want to move to Venus to get warm. And they would have to get permission from our descendants first.

We laughed about all the kids who believed in the Santa myth and got nothing for Christmas but a bunch of cheap plastic toys. He reminded us that years later, when all the junk they got would be broken and long forgotten, we would still have our stars.

Literature text



Tea video

As you know, the site of Stonehenge in England is one of the world's most enduring mysteries. No one knows why prehistoric people built the enigmatic megaliths, although researchers over the years have argued the site was originally a sun calendar, a symbol of unity, or a burial monument.

Though only some of the stones remain, at the center of the site once sat an oval of bluestones, or igneous rocks that turn a bluish hue when wet or freshly cut. Surrounding the bluestones are five giant sandstone megaliths called trilithons, or two vertical standing slabs capped by a horizontal stone, arranged in the shape of a horseshoe. Around the horseshoe, ancient builders erected a circular ring of bluestones.

Past researchers believed that ancient people first used the site 5,000 years ago, and the bluestone oval and circle were erected earlier than the massive sandstone horseshoe. But new analysis suggests that around 2600 B.C. the Neolithic people built the giant sandstone horseshoe, drawing the stone from nearby quarries. Only then did builders arrange the much smaller bluestones, which were probably imported from Wales. Those bluestones were then rearranged at various positions throughout the site over the next millennium.

The new dating allows the archaeologists to tie the structure to specific people who lived in the area at the time. The builders of the larger sandstone structures were pig farmers

Historical text

# what we measure

As participants interacted with the content, researchers measured their reactions on a spectrum of emotions based on two primary variables: valence and arousal.

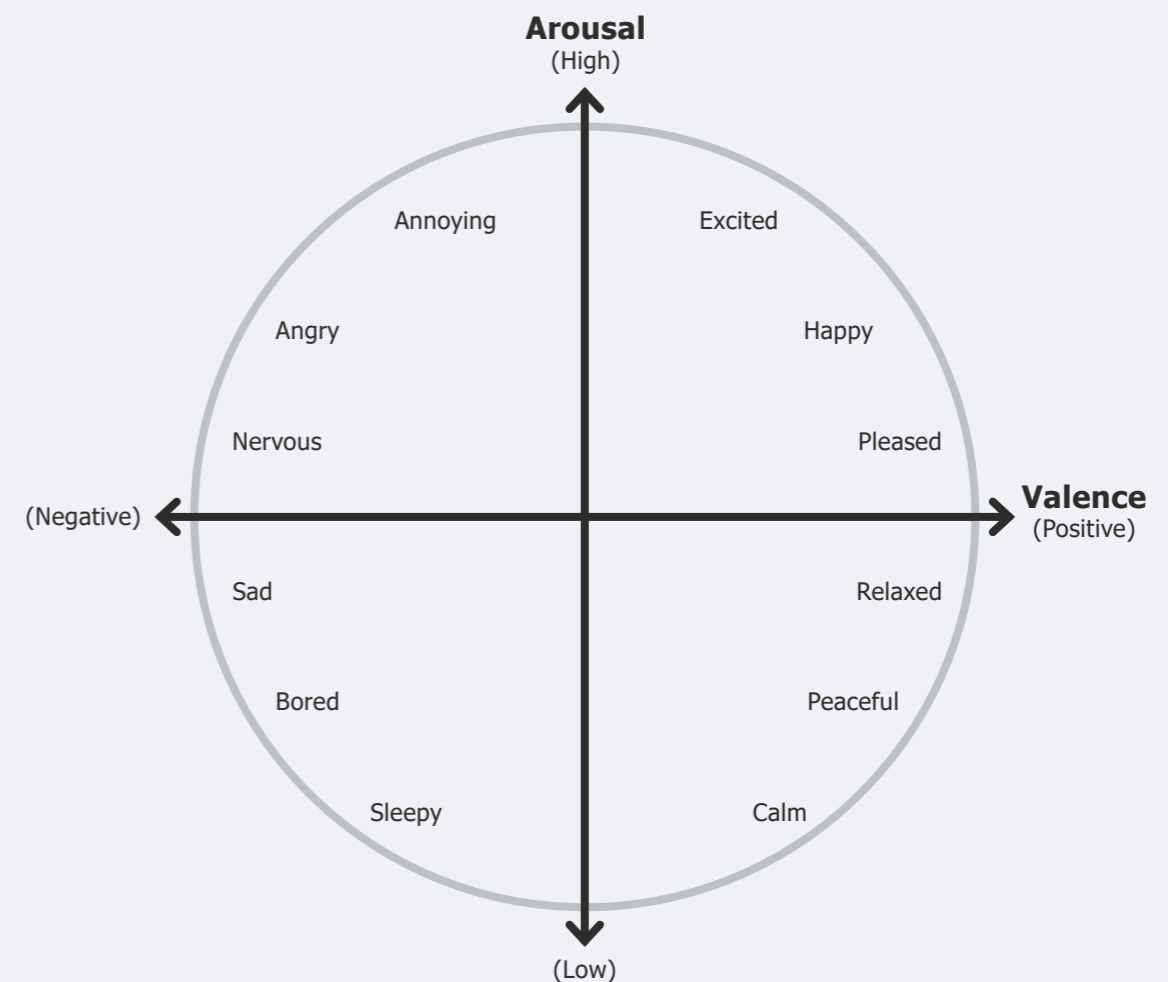
► **Valence** is the positive or negative emotional response to a stimulus, ranging from positive to negative

► **Arousal** is the intensity of the emotional response, ranging from calming (low) to very intense (high)

**Valence** (a pleasure–displeasure continuum) and **arousal** (or alertness) are considered two independent neurophysiological systems at the foundation of all other affective states. Varying degrees of valence and arousal impact emotions, which are essential to memory and decisions.

In addition, researchers monitored and measured the following variables in real time:

- **Attention**
- **Motivation to act**
- **Working memory** (cognitive workload)
- **Fatigue**



# stand out in the inbox

When you're competing for attention in a crowded email inbox, you can't lean on the same techniques as everyone else. Use the guidelines in this report to deliver a memorable and engaging sales pitch using video email.

- ▶ **NEUTRALIZE THE NEGATIVE**
- ▶ **CREATE A CONCRETE MESSAGE**
- ▶ **ADD DYNAMIC ELEMENTS**
- ▶ **LEAVE ROOM FOR REFLECTION**



stand out in the inbox

neutralize  
the negative

# the inbox is a negative experience

Email may be necessary, but this study showed that it's not an enjoyable experience.

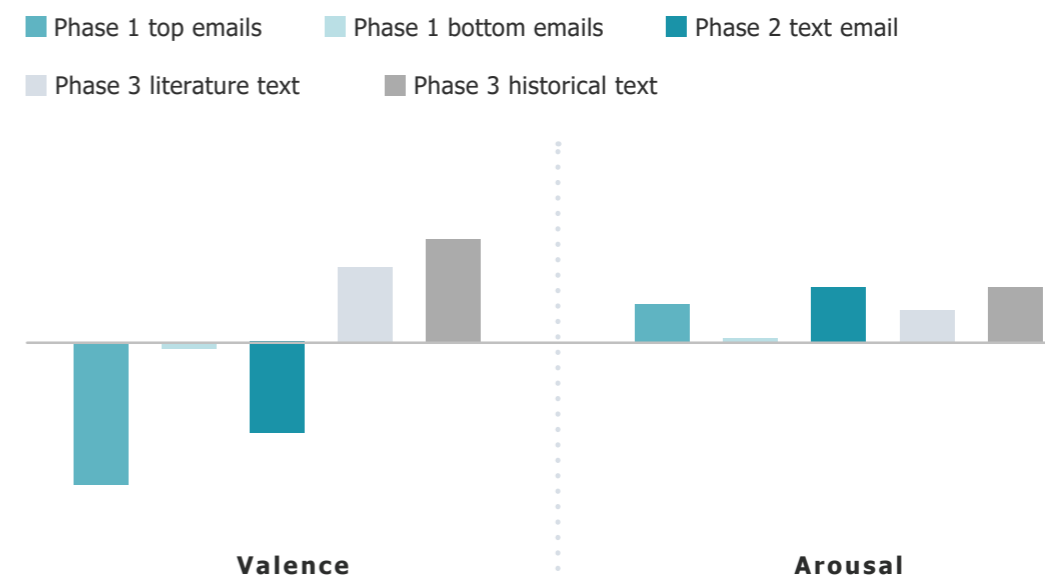
Researchers noted that reading text emails in Phases 1 and 2 of the study provoked more negative valence than reading either text in Phase 3.

Watching the video emails in the first two phases led to significantly lower valence compared to the two videos in Phase 3.

Taken together, these findings suggest that **the email inbox provokes a negative emotional experience**. So, whether you send a text or video email, your buyers are receiving those messages in a negative frame of mind.

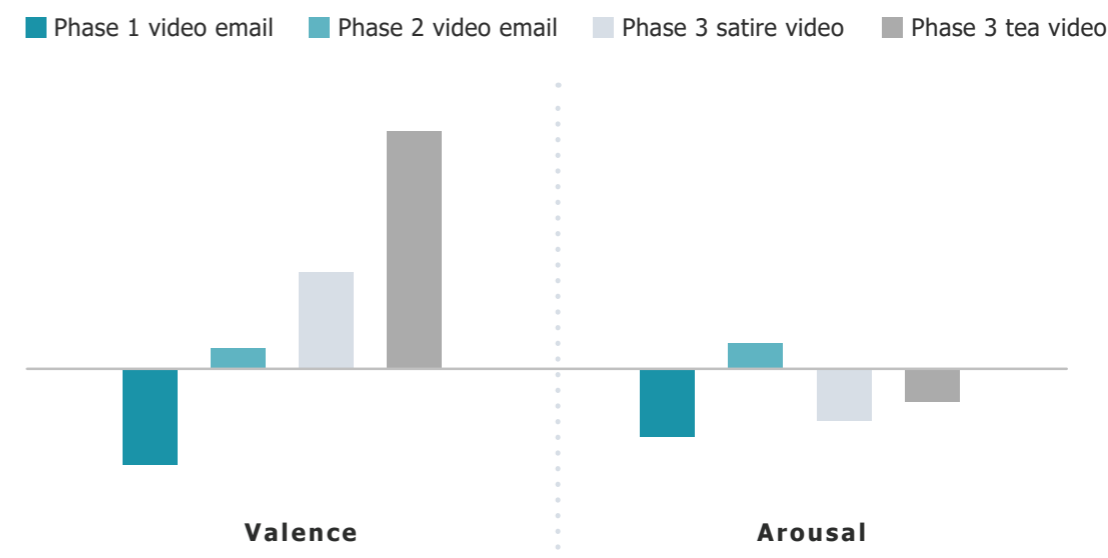
Thankfully, you can neutralize that negative experience.

## Participants' valence and arousal while reading text



People experienced a more negative emotion (low valence) while reading text-based emails compared to other text-based content.

## Participants' valence and arousal while watching videos



People experienced a more negative emotion (low valence) while watching video emails compared to other video content.

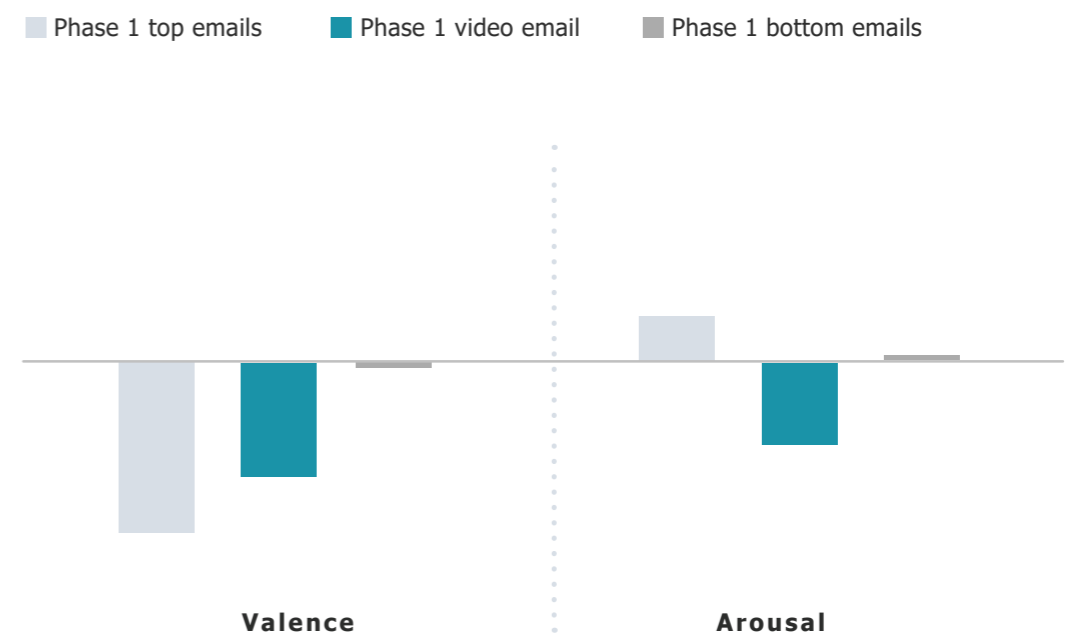
# video neutralizes the negative

In Phase 1 of the study, researchers noted statistically significant differences in participants' valence and arousal while they read through the emails.

Participants started reading the first set of text emails in an unpleasant state. When they watched the video email, their negative feelings decreased. And, by the time they viewed the last set of text emails, they returned to a neutral state.

When your prospect sees a video email, it doesn't disrupt an otherwise positive experience. Rather, **the experience of watching a video email among many text emails helps the prospect transition from a negative emotional state to a more neutral state.**

## Participants' valence and arousal during Phase 1



When participants viewed a video email among many text emails, their negative emotional state decreased.



# promote a *positive experience*

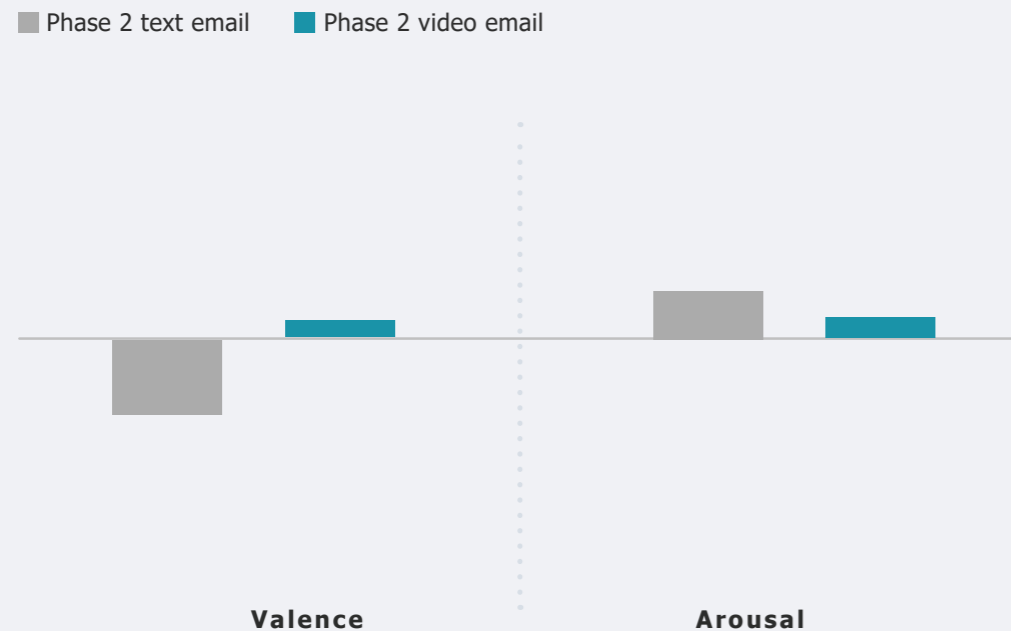
EEG and ECG data from Phase 2 of the study further support the positive experience of watching video emails.

**Participants felt positive and happy when viewing the video email.** On the other hand, the text email made people feel anxious, as indicated by their negative valence and high arousal.

Remember, both emails in Phase 2 used the same script. The only difference was that one used text and the other used video to deliver the message.

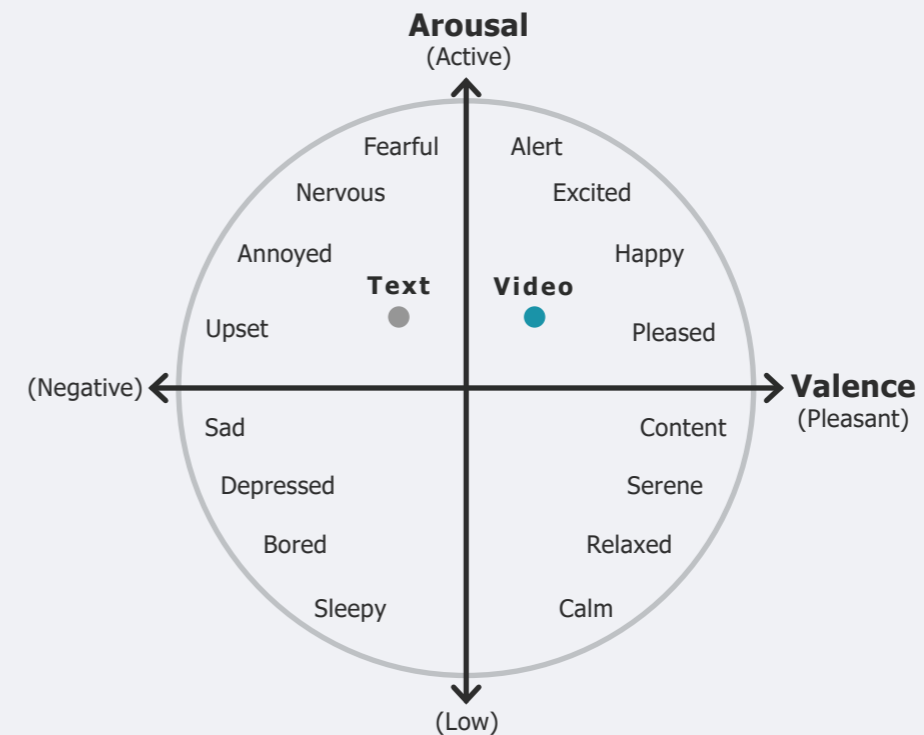
Video can neutralize the negative experience of email. It can even promote a more positive experience than just text. But how can you make the biggest impact with custom recorded videos?

## Participants' valence and arousal during Phase 2



Participants had a more positive experience watching the video vs. reading the text.

## Emotional state of participants during Phase 2



Participants felt happy while watching the video but felt anxious while reading the text.



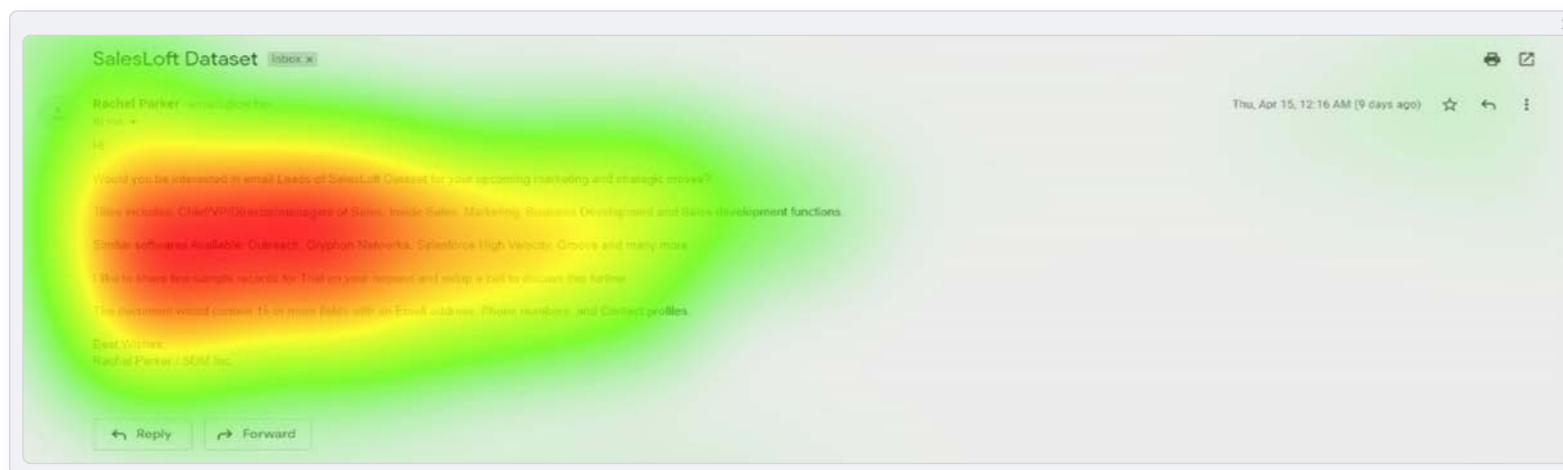
stand out in the inbox

create a  
*concrete*  
message

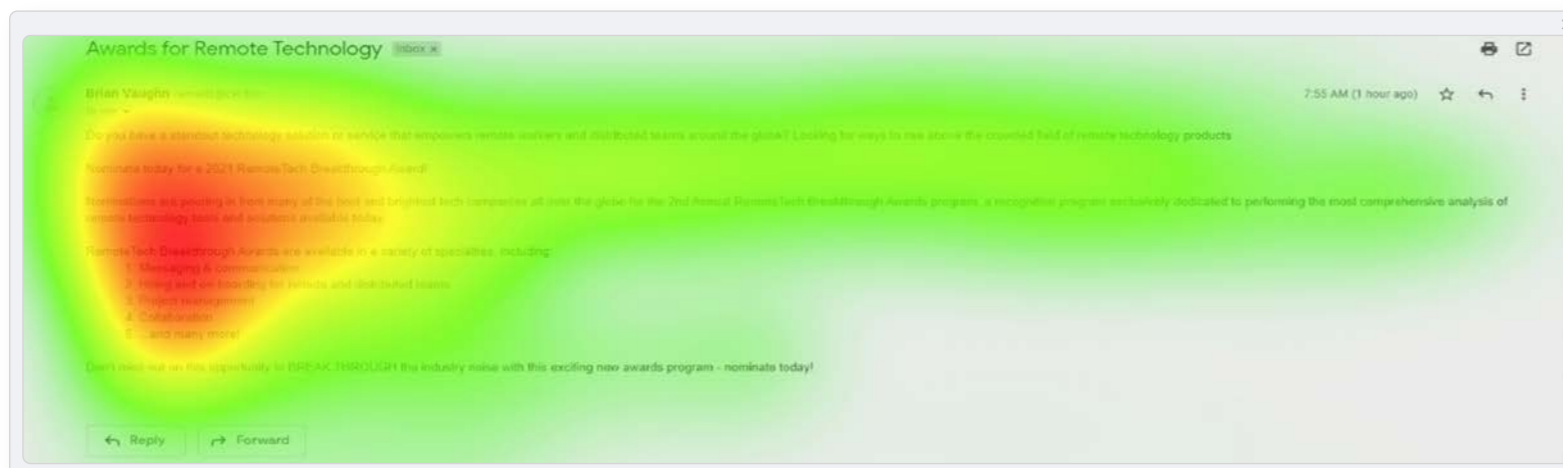
# write *short* sentences

Eye-tracking data captured during Phase 1 shows that readers tend to concentrate mainly on the beginning of paragraphs. And that holds true regardless of how long those paragraphs are.

Short sentences and short paragraphs hold people's focus better than long sentences and long paragraphs.



In an email about a SalesLoft dataset, the sentences are short, and new paragraphs start frequently. As a result, the viewer's focus extends over most of the content.



When sentences and paragraphs are longer, it's hard for the reader to sustain focus to the end. That lack of attention could negatively impact people's ability to process and remember the message.

High attention

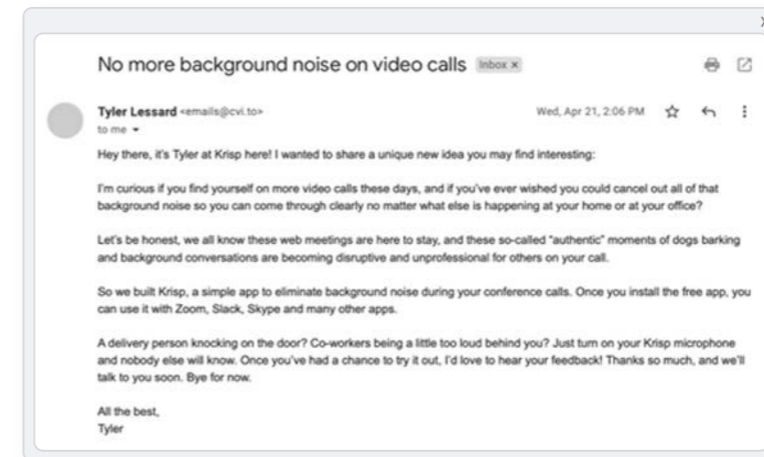
Low attention

# build mental pictures

In Phase 2, the text email followed the same script as the video email.

The specific and concrete language enabled participants' brains to visualize the software application mentioned in the email. As a result, **46 percent of participants remembered details from the text email in Phase 2.**

Granted, the video email was easier to process and generated more precise memories. But these findings suggest that **text-based emails can still create a memory trace when they contain specific and concrete language** that help viewers build mental pictures from the words.



Here's the text from the Phase 2 email:

Hey there, it's Tyler at Krisp here! I wanted to share a unique new idea you may find interesting:

I'm curious if you find yourself on more video calls these days, and if you've ever wished you could cancel out all of that background noise so you can come through clearly no matter what else is happening at your home or at your office?

Let's be honest, we all know these web meetings are here to stay, and these so-called "authentic" moments of dogs barking and background conversations are becoming disruptive and unprofessional for others on your call.

So we built Krisp, a simple app to eliminate background noise during your conference calls. Once you install the free app, you can use it with Zoom, Slack, Skype and many other apps.

A delivery person knocking on the door? Co-workers being a little too loud behind you? Just turn on your Krisp microphone and nobody else will know. Once you've had a chance to try it out, I'd love to hear your feedback! Thanks so much, and we'll talk soon. Bye for now.

All the best,

Tyler

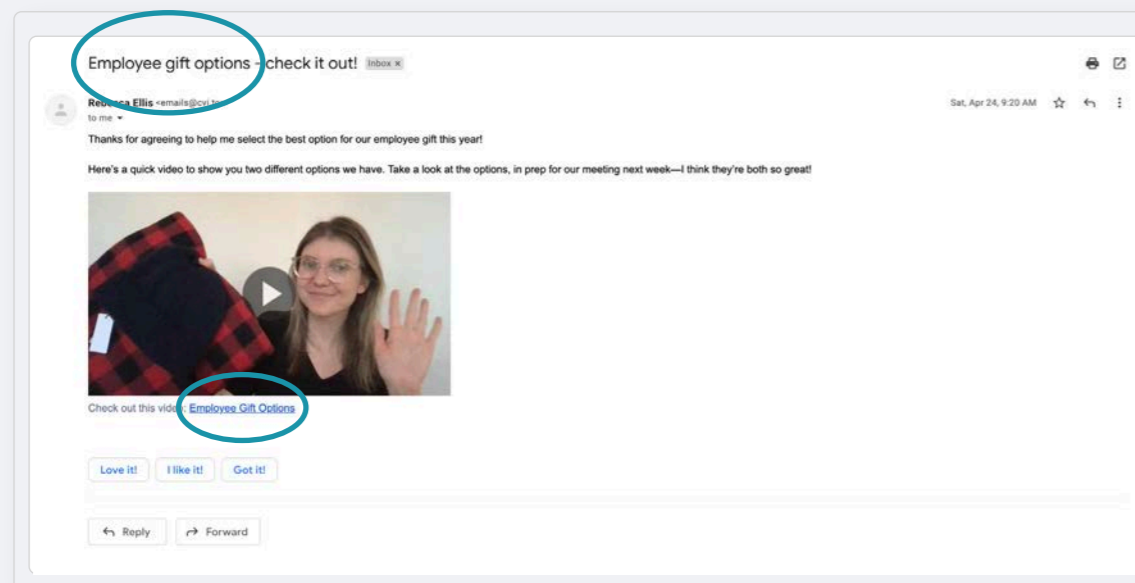
## link titles to the *reward*



To make your message more memorable, use a video title that links to the reward or action that you want your audience to remember. Then, repeat that title in your email.

The video included in Phase 1 was titled “Employee Gift Options” in Vidyard (the platform that hosted the video), and the title also appears in the subject line and body of the email.

As a result, participants who remembered the video email recalled specific phrases that matched the title. And because the title encapsulated the topic of the video, they remembered that as well.



Two days after the study, **participants recalled the following details from the Phase 1 video:**

“[I remember] an email with a video of a coworker asking me to help pick between a fleece blanket and a beanie as the company gift.”

“The only other email I recall is the video on employee choice of gift.”

“Email with a video of a coworker asking me to help pick between a fleece blanket and a beanie as the company gift.”



stand out in the inbox

add  
*dynamic*  
elements

## guide the *narrative*

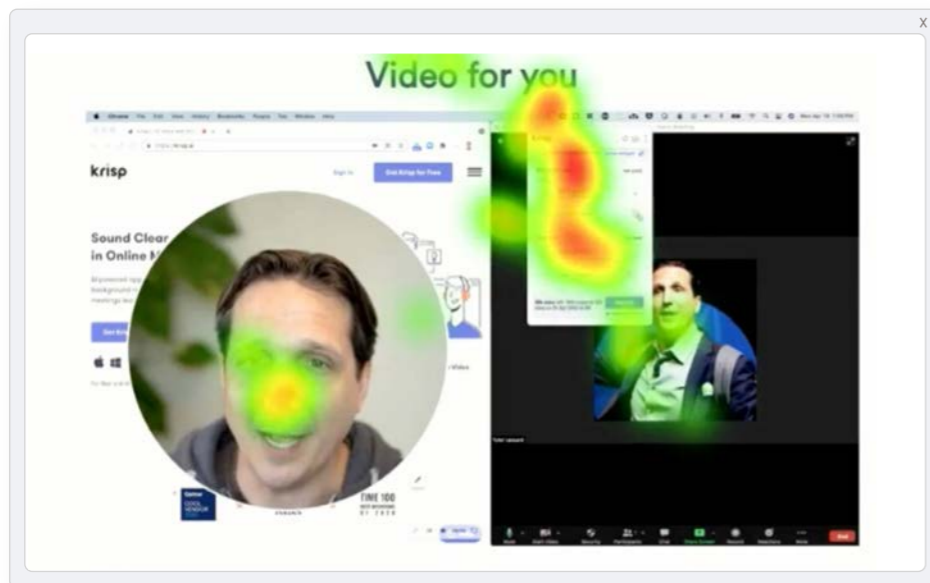
The video in Phase 2 of the study included several dynamic elements that enhanced the experience, including an engaging presenter, a screen recording of the software with lots of movement, and sound effects to support the message.

These additional elements improved the experience, but that's not all.

Eye tracking recordings from Phase 2 show that participants tended to skim the text email. But **when participants watched the video, they held their focus on the person speaking, and then moved their gaze to focus where the presenter prompted them to.**

When people read text, they might miss some of the most important points in your message. Video, on the other hand, can help you guide the narrative, so your audience understands where and when to pay attention.

### ► Watch how participants viewed the video email:



## show and tell



**Tyler Lessard**  
VP of Marketing,  
Vidyard

Video isn't just a different way to deliver your same old email message. It provides an opportunity to show, rather than just tell, and use visuals to make your message clearer, more impactful, and more memorable.

For example, when recording a video message with your webcam, you can use simple props, diagrams, or even illustrations drawn on a small whiteboard to emphasize your key points and clearly explain how you can help.

You can use screen recordings to visualize a relatable customer story, demonstrate how your solution can help, or showcase a resource your buyer may find helpful.

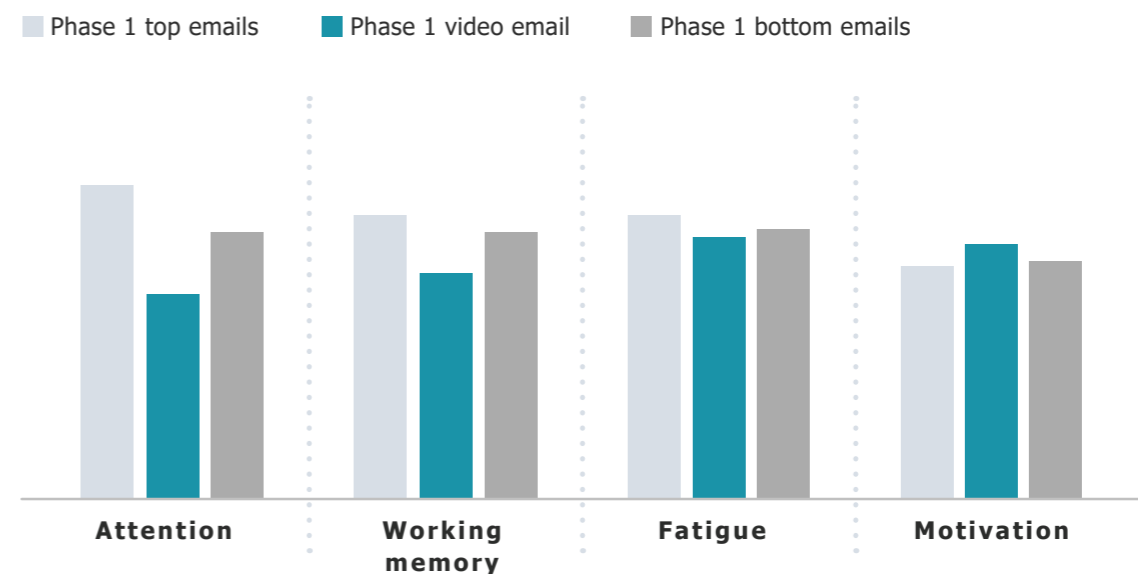
Using visual elements in creative ways can not only draw people into your story, but it can help ensure that your prospect more readily remembers your message.

## inspire more *motivation*

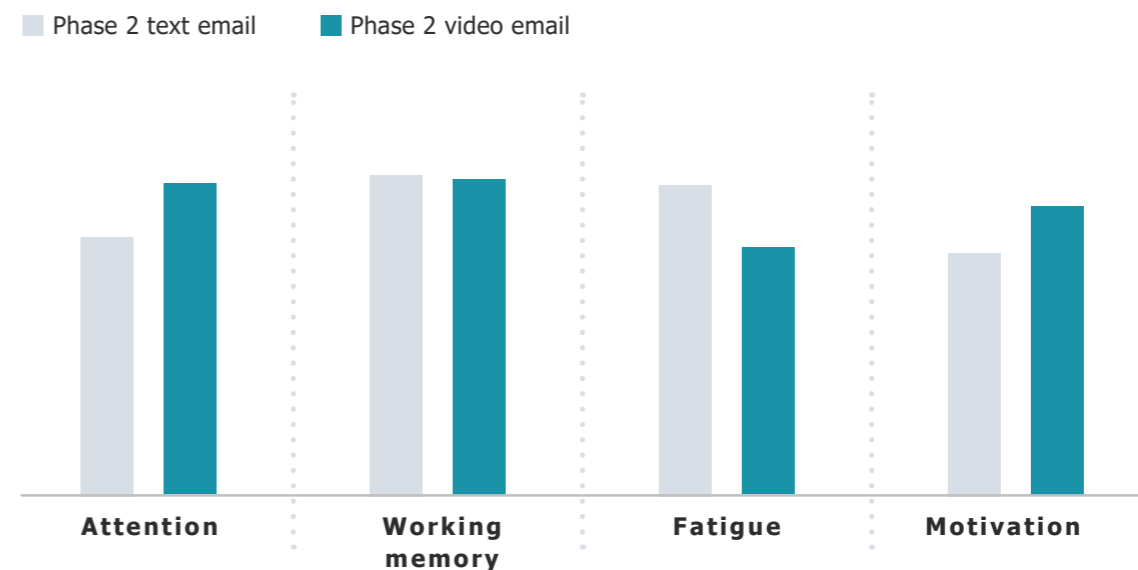
EEG and ECG results from both Phase 1 and Phase 2 show that participants tended to feel more motivated and less fatigued while viewing the video emails versus the text emails.

Higher motivation and lower fatigue may suggest that **the information in the videos was easier to process**. The dynamic visual and audio elements made it easier for people to understand the message, and tended to feel more motivated to act on it.

### Participants' EEG signals during Phase 1



### Participants' EEG signals during Phase 2



In Phases 1 and 2, participants tended to experience higher motivation and lower fatigue while viewing the video email.

# build *precise memories*

People are more likely to forget text emails. In Phase 1 of the study, 59 percent of participants didn't remember any of the emails after 48 hours.

Participants who did remember one or more emails remembered details from the video email.

Researchers saw similar results in Phase 2. **Participants remembered more (and with more precision) from the video email.**

For example, when asked to share what they remembered two days after the study, participants could recall the name of the software in the video and some specific features.

► **46 percent of participants remembered details from the text email in Phase 2.**



"I specifically remember the line referring to how background noise was more endearing at first (at the beginning of the pandemic, but it did not mention "pandemic"), and how it can now be considered unprofessional. I think that's a matter of opinion, though."

"The text-based email introduced a software that eliminates background noise on any video conferencing platform."



► **59 percent of participants remembered details from the video in Phase 2.**



"It was about a service that could cancel out background noise when on a video call, dog, doorbell, noisy team members in the same room. Once downloaded and engaged, it would sound like you were alone in a quiet space even when you weren't."

"It was a video talking about a microphone filter software product called Krisp. The software could be downloaded and then has integrations with video chat products such as Zoom and Slack, allowing the user to dampen/hide background noise."





stand out in the inbox



leave room for

reflection

## add some *neutral space*

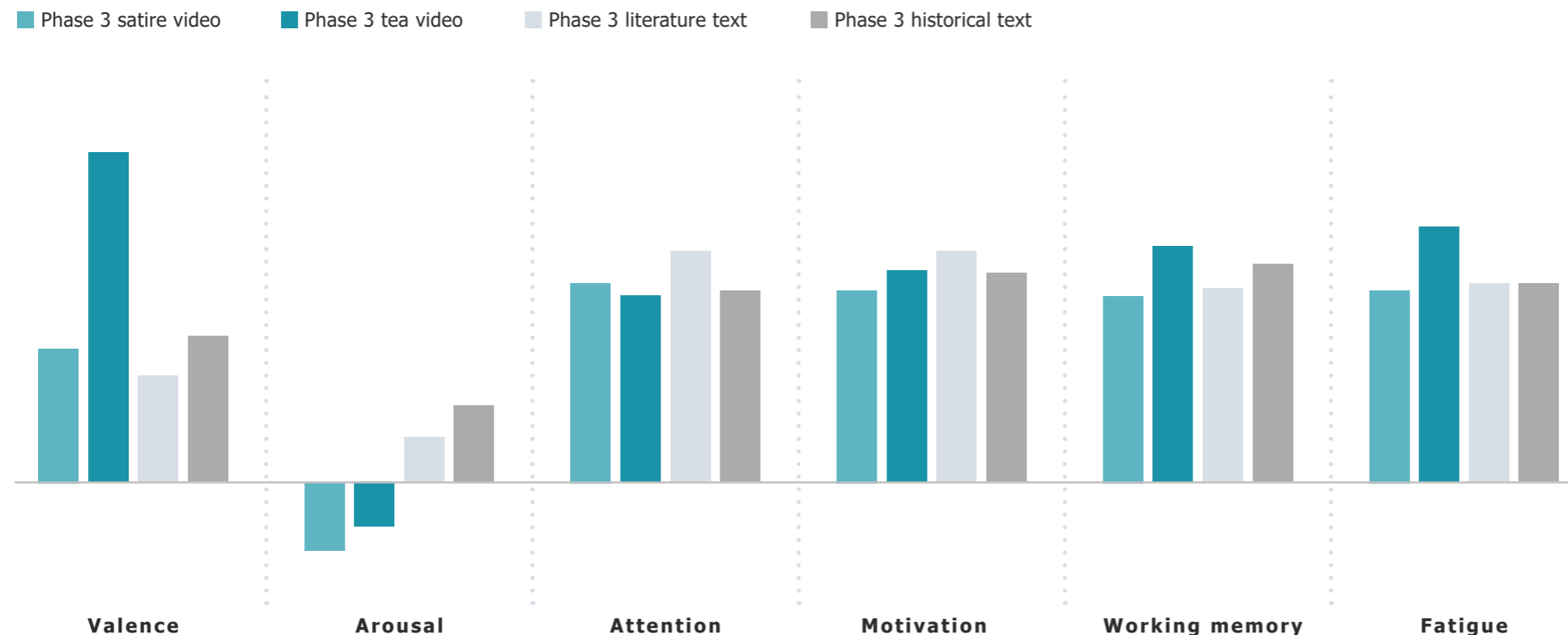
A surprising finding from Phase 3 was that the tea video evoked a significantly more positive state (higher valence) and higher working memory than the other content, including the more exciting satirical video.

**The tea video—which could be considered bland—put people in a more positive state of mind** and seemed to provoke more thought processing (wondering what would happen next). The satirical video made them relax.

When you're creating videos, leave room for reflection. Even a few seconds of more neutral content at the end of a commercial video can trigger people to think about the content they've just seen and apply it to their situation.

Those few extra seconds give them time to process your message before going back to their inbox—and back to all the other emails that await them there.

### Participants' EEG signals during Phase 3



In Phase 3, participants experienced higher valence and working memory while watching the tea video compared to other content.

# stand out in the inbox

Getting people's attention and interest over email is becoming more challenging. People receive hundreds of emails every day and decision-makers are filtering out and deleting most of them.

What's worse, you're not just competing with all the other emails in their inbox— you're competing with the inherently negative experience of email itself.

This research shows that video emails can neutralize that negative experience. And when you follow the guidelines below, you can deliver a more memorable and motivating sales pitch.

## ▶ NEUTRALIZE THE NEGATIVE

Use video in your emails to move buyers from a negative inbox experience to a more neutral state of mind.

## ▶ CREATE A CONCRETE MESSAGE

Use short sentences and paragraphs, build mental pictures with your words, and match the title of your video to the subject line of the email.

## ▶ ADD DYNAMIC ELEMENTS

Include movement, screenshots, animated gestures, and sound effects to improve the experience and make your message more memorable.

## ▶ LEAVE ROOM FOR REFLECTION

Add some neutral space to your video to give your prospect time to reflect and process the information you offer.



## about B2B DecisionLabs

B2B DecisionLabs is the only B2B research firm dedicated to studying how decision-makers frame value and make choices. Unlike traditional market research and advisory firms, B2B DecisionLabs conducts rigorous research studies based in several Decision Science disciplines:

- **Behavioral studies** – understand why buyers behave the way they do.
- **Neuroscience research** – observe what's going on inside their brains.
- **Field trials** – validate your approach in the real world.

[CONTACT US TO LEARN MORE](#)



in partnership with



## author



**Dr. Carmen Simon**

Cognitive Neuroscientist,  
B2B DecisionLabs  
Chief Science Officer,  
Corporate Visions



Carmen Simon, PhD, is a cognitive neuroscientist, Chief Science Officer at Corporate Visions, and a lead researcher at B2B DecisionLabs. A Silicon Valley entrepreneur and keynote speaker, Carmen has pioneered a groundbreaking approach to creating memorable messages that are easy to process, hard to forget, and impossible to ignore—using the latest in brain science. Dr. Simon is the author of *Impossible to Ignore: Creating Memorable Content to Influence Decisions*.

## contributor



**Tyler Lessard**  
VP of Marketing,

