

The Price of AI Functionality in Email Productivity Software: A Descriptive Analysis of Subscription Tiers and Feature Bundling

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Abstract

This descriptive working paper asks how subscription pricing structures and AI feature access differ across selected email productivity software products. We recorded 30 plan listings from 12 vendors’ own pricing pages in a hand-picked sample, re-checked on 31 October 2026. Headline statistics use the 24 verified plans from 10 vendors, excluding 6 plans whose prices could not be verified. Among 14 annual-billing plans priced in US dollars, list prices run from \$4.17 to \$64.00 per seat per month (median \$25.00); monthly and two-year plans are reported separately. Where both terms are printed, annual billing is priced 20.0 percent below monthly billing at the median (11 plans, 5 vendors). Of the 24 plans, 16 are coded as stating AI functionality, most often metered by credits or quotas (8) or included without a stated limit (5); 2 offer AI only as an add-on or integration and 4 do not state AI either way. No adjacent-tier pair meets the conditions for reading a price step as the price associated with AI access, so no AI price premium is computed; this is a finding about comparability. The analysis is exploratory and not pre-registered, and it makes no causal, welfare or representativeness claim. The author’s company sells one of the products in this category and publishes the commercial price index from whose records the sample was drawn; its own product is excluded from the sample, and the vendors were not consulted.

Keywords: subscription pricing, tiered pricing, feature bundling, AI functionality, email productivity software, descriptive analysis, SaaS

1 Introduction

Some email applications and the services built around them state that they include artificial intelligence (AI) features such as drafting, summarising, sorting and search. Their pricing pages present these features inside ladders of plans that differ in price, billing term, seat rules and feature lists. A reader who wants to know what such plans cost, and how access to AI features is arranged within them, has to read each vendor’s page separately, and the pages do not use a common

***Competing interest.** The author’s company, Donezo Inbox, sells one of the products in the category studied and publishes a commercial price index from whose records the sample was drawn. The scholarly dataset and the commercial index are separate. The vendors were not consulted and have not reviewed this paper. The sample is hand-picked and is not representative. See Section 11.

vocabulary: AI may be listed as included, limited by credits or a daily allowance, available with the user’s own key, sold as an add-on, or not mentioned.

This paper records and describes those arrangements for a selected set of email productivity products on one date. It is a descriptive study in the sense of Gerring [1] and Loeb et al. [2]: it states what was observed, how it was classified, and how much the results move under different inclusion rules, and it makes no causal claim. The research question is stated in Section 3.

The topic is motivated by the presence of AI functionality in email products, a setting in which research has begun to measure what generative AI tools do to work [3, 4]. This paper measures neither productivity nor the value of any feature. It describes prices and plan structures only.

We make the following contributions, each modest. First, a dated, plan-level record of list prices, billing terms and AI feature statements for 30 plan listings from 12 vendors, with each plan’s verification status. Second, a set of explicit rules for comparing plans that are priced in different currencies, on different billing terms and on different seat bases, together with a classification of how AI access is arranged. Third, a test of when a price step between two plans of one vendor could be read as the price associated with AI access, and a report that, in these data, no such step passes the test.

Commercial relationship. The author’s company sells one of the products in this category and publishes the commercial price index from whose records the sample was drawn. Section 4 describes how the sample was built with this in mind, the paper names no product as better or worse than another, and Section 11 gives the full statement.

2 Related work

Why plan ladders exist. Theory gives several reasons for a vendor of an information good to sell versions at different prices. Differential pricing of versions can approximate efficiency when fixed costs are large [5]; versioning is optimal under conditions derived by Bhargava and Choudhary [6]; and a seller may degrade part of a product to price discriminate [7]. These sit within the broader theory of screening and second-degree price discrimination [8, 9, 10]. Shapiro and Varian’s practitioner article [11] supplies the term *versioning*; we cite it for terminology only. This paper observes whether and how plans differ. It cannot say whether any lower tier is deliberately degraded.

Bundling. The bundling literature studies large bundles of information goods [12], bundles whose additional goods decline in value [13], bundles in which the customer self-selects items from a pool [14], pricing by bundle size [15], bundling as a means of deterring entry [16], and unbundling in a digital category [17]. The abstract of Bakos and Brynjolfsson notes that the large-bundle result does not extend to goods with material marginal cost, a condition that AI features, which use computing resources for each request, may meet more often than other email features do. Plans that allot a fixed AI allowance resemble the customised bundles of the self-selection paper, and the use of a few simple tiers is the case studied in the bundle-size paper. We test none of this theory. Crawford and Yurukoglu [18] show what welfare estimation of bundling requires in another setting; this paper does not attempt anything of the kind.

Subscription, usage and freemium pricing. Fixed-fee and usage-based pricing of information goods have been analysed since early in the commercial web [19, 20], and Wu et al. [21] model bundles of variety and usage under pay-per-use and subscription pricing. Work on software as a service is mostly conceptual: Li and Kumar [22] propose a framework and point to data sources,

Choudhary [23] compares perpetual licensing with subscription delivery, and Lambrecht et al. [24] review how firms monetise digital goods. Saltan and Smolander [25] found that most of the sources in their multivocal review of SaaS pricing were grey literature, which supports reading vendors’ own pricing pages as a primary source here. Gu et al. [26] report a field experiment on a premium version within a freemium line; this paper has no experiment.

Switching costs and subscription inertia. Switching-cost theory [27, 28, 29] bears on introductory and free tiers, and Dubé et al. [30] show that its standard price prediction is not universal. DellaVigna and Malmendier [31] document flat-fee choices that cost more than the alternatives, which illustrates why a posted list price need not describe what customers pay. None of these works concerns software plans, and this paper does not estimate switching costs.

Posted prices as data. Descriptive studies of posted online prices exist for retail goods [32, 33, 34, 35]. They are the methodological precedent for a dated capture of vendor-posted prices, and Cavallo [34] supports treating online posted prices as informative records of what a seller charges, with limits. Boegershausen et al. [36] set out validity concerns for data collected from the web, which structure our verification and limitations. These studies cover physical retail goods, not tiered software plans.

AI products and their pricing. Bergemann et al. [37] analyse menu pricing of large language models, and Zhang [38] models upstream usage fees against downstream subscriptions in a preprint that has not, to our knowledge, been refereed. Several 2026 items come closest to our subject, and we could not confirm any of them as peer reviewed. Gonzalez [39] analyses episodes in which AI providers changed pricing, limits or access terms of subscriptions after consumers had paid. Mandalunes [40] released a replication dataset of app-store subscription prices across countries (the accompanying manuscript was not located). Fan [41] documents a versioned capture of advertised prices for LLM API access and evaluates how comparable the records are. Gharbi [42] maps AI access levers such as usage caps and premium tiers onto a marketing typology from a small set of cases. They differ from this study in product category (AI assistants, API catalogs or app-store listings, not email software), unit and aim.

What we did not find. In the sources we searched (Crossref and OpenAlex, with web searches; the search log is in the replication package), we did not find a prior study that records plan-level list prices together with AI feature access for email productivity software or for any single application-software category. That is an absence in the places searched, not proof that none exists: SSRN, NBER, RePEc, EconLit, Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar were not searched with their own engines. We make no claim of novelty beyond the descriptive record described in the Introduction.

3 Research question

The research question is: **How do subscription pricing structures and AI feature access differ across selected email productivity software products?** It is answered through descriptive sub-questions, each tied to named tables:

- Q1.** What do the plans cost per seat per month on their own billing term, and what do 1, 5 and 10 users pay in a year? (Tables 3 and 4, Figures 1 and 2.)

- Q2.** Where a product publishes both annual and monthly billing, how do the two prices differ? (Table 5, Figure 3.)
- Q3.** Which plans state AI functionality, how is access restricted, and at which tier does it first appear? (Tables 6 and 7, Figure 4.)
- Q4.** Where are plans validly comparable, so that a price step could be read as the price associated with AI access? (Table 9.)
- Q5.** How sensitive are the results to the inclusion rules? (Tables 10 and 11.)

The study is exploratory. The protocol was written after the data were first collected, so none of these questions was registered in advance, and no hypothesis is tested.

4 Data and sample

4.1 Source and selection

The sample was drawn from the records of the Email Software Value Index [43], a commercial price comparison published by the author’s company. The author’s company’s own product, Donezo Inbox, was deliberately excluded from the sample as a conflict-of-interest safeguard: its records are removed by a fixed rule before the dataset is built, so it appears in no table, figure or statistic. The remaining 28 index records cover 12 vendors. The index does not state a selection rule. An internal methodology note describes the products as those a buyer comparing AI email tools would meet, with some added for price context. We therefore treat the sample as hand-picked (purposive). It has no sampling frame, no random selection and no stated inclusion rule, and **it is not claimed to be representative** of email software, of AI email tools or of any market. Every result describes this set only.

We added 2 supplement rows for one vendor (Spark Plus and Pro, priced in US dollars on the re-check date), because the index’s euro records for those plans could not be reproduced. The dataset therefore has 30 plan rows. Plans that vendors list but the index omits (for example enterprise tiers and some intermediate tiers) are not in the dataset, so tier ladders are incomplete for several vendors and “adjacent tier” means adjacent within the dataset.

4.2 Observation dates and unit

The index’s records were read by its publisher in a browser on 21 October 2026, except a small number of price-only records first read on 15 October 2026. For this study every source page was fetched again on 31 October 2026 with a plain HTTP request (no login, no cookies, no scripts executed), saved, hashed, and compared with the record. The analysis is a single cross-section as of 31 October 2026; the interval from first reading to re-check means that vendors may have changed prices in between. The unit of observation is the plan (one row per plan per vendor page). Plans are nested in vendors, so plans from one vendor are not independent observations, and every statistic reports both the number of plans and the number of vendors.

The re-check was made from one network location, an internet service provider address in Serbia. Pages that price by locale can show other amounts or currencies elsewhere. This is not a controlled vantage point.

4.3 Verification status and the headline set

Every plan carries a verification status. *Verified*: price, currency, billing term and seat basis were re-read on the vendor’s own page on 31 October 2026 and match the record (13 plans, 8 vendors). *Partly verified*: the price was re-read and matches, but the billing term is inferred rather than printed, or the currency is a bare symbol on a locale-priced page (11 plans, 4 vendors). *Unverified*: the plan is not on the page as served, the amount or currency conflicts, or the term cannot be determined (6 plans, 4 vendors). The unverified plans are Shortwave Free and Pro (not visible on the page as served), the Spark Plus and Pro records priced in euros, Hiver Growth and Help Scout Standard (unlabelled amounts and no determinable term). They remain in the dataset and enter one sensitivity run.

The **headline set** used for every headline statistic is the verified and partly verified plans: 24 plans from 10 vendors. Table 1 gives the composition. Every price and AI statistic in Section 6 uses the headline set unless a table says otherwise.

Table 1: Sample composition by verification status, category, currency and billing term.

Group	Value	Plans	Vendors
All dataset rows	all	30	12
Row origin	index record	28	12
Row origin	re-check supplement	2	1
Verification status	Verified	13	8
Verification status	Partly verified	11	4
Verification status	Unverified	6	4
Headline set (verified + partly verified)	in set	24	10
Category, headline set	Client	11	6
Category, headline set	Assistant	6	2
Category, headline set	Filter	3	1
Category, headline set	Shared inbox	4	2
Currency, headline set	USD	23	9
Currency, headline set	EUR	1	1
Billing term, headline set	Free	3	3
Billing term, headline set	Annual	15	8
Billing term, headline set	Monthly	3	1
Billing term, headline set	Two-year	3	1
Billing term, headline set	unknown	0	0
Paid plans, headline set	paid	21	10
Free plans, headline set	free	3	3

Source: [output/T01_sample_composition.csv](#). A plan is one row per plan per vendor page; plans are nested in vendors, so counts of plans are not independent observations.

4.4 Categories

Each product is assigned one category by a stated rule applied to the vendor’s own description: a *client* replaces the mailbox provider’s interface for reading and writing mail; an *assistant* sits on an existing client and sorts, labels or drafts with AI; a *filter* sorts or prioritises mail by rules in an existing client; a *shared inbox* is a team or customer-facing mailbox, help desk or ticketing tool. Categories are the researcher’s judgement. Within a category there are few vendors, so category comparisons are descriptive only.

5 Methods

5.1 Currency

The original currency is recorded and kept. No conversion enters any headline statistic or table, and US dollars and euros are never mixed. A dollar or euro sign without an ISO code is read as USD or EUR respectively, and the basis is recorded. Among the plans in the headline set, 1 is priced in euros (a Mailbird plan whose yearly price is promotional); it enters the AI counts but not the dollar price statistics. The only conversion is in the labelled sensitivity scenarios S2 and S3, at one dated rate, 1 EUR = 1.1172 USD, the European Central Bank euro reference rate of 30 October 2026, the last published before the observation date. Free plans carry the page’s currency nominally and are never converted.

5.2 Billing terms

Each plan has a listed billing term: *monthly* (price for one month on month-to-month billing), *annual* (price per month when billed once a year), *biennial* (price per month on a two-year term), *free*, or *unknown*. The monthly equivalent on a plan’s own term is the price per month as printed, or the annual total divided by 12, or the two-year total divided by 24. Statistics are always stratified by term, and a monthly price and an annual-billing monthly equivalent are never pooled. Where the page prints one number beside a billing toggle and does not say which term is selected, the term is recorded as inferred and the plan is at most partly verified. Prices are vendor-stated list prices; promotions are flagged where the page flags them.

The annual-versus-monthly difference is computed only for plans that print both prices and for which both were re-observed on 31 October 2026: $\text{discount} = (\text{monthly price} - \text{annual-equivalent monthly price}) / \text{monthly price}$. Plans whose other-term price was recorded on 21 October 2026 but not visible on 31 October 2026 (Superhuman and Missive, where the monthly price sits behind a toggle) are excluded here and appear only in sensitivity scenario S6.

5.3 Seats and annual cost

The annual cost for 1, 5 and 10 users is the annual price per seat times the number of users, in the plan’s own currency and on its own term; for monthly-billing plans this is 12 payments. Seat caps make the cost unavailable above the cap, minimum seats make it unavailable below the minimum, and a vendor page that asks for a quote at a size makes the cost unavailable at that size. No volume discount is applied, because none is published except where noted in the table notes. SaneBox sells per subscription rather than per seat; one subscription covers several accounts of one person, so N users are assumed to need N subscriptions, and these plans are excluded from the 5- and 10-user statistics. Free plans have no cost and are excluded from priced statistics. Add-ons, per-resolution charges, taxes and checkout discounts are not priced.

5.4 AI classification

AI functionality is coded only from what the vendor’s own page states. A feature counts as AI functionality if the plan’s own page presents it as based on AI, a large language model or machine learning and it does one of: drafting or writing assistance; summarising; automatic sorting, labelling or triage; question answering or search over mail; meeting transcription or notes; or acting on mail through an agent. Rules-only automation, filters not described as AI, spam blocking not described as AI, and an integration with a third-party AI service are not counted as included AI (the last

is coded as an add-on or integration). Each plan receives one mutually exclusive class (Table 2). *Not stated is not absent*: it is never read as absence, and the class Absent (stated) requires explicit negative evidence on the page.

Table 2: AI classes (mutually exclusive, plan level). AI-capable means Included, Metered, Own key or Preview.

Class	Definition
Included	AI features are listed as part of the plan and the page states no usage figure, credit count, quota or relative usage multiple.
Metered	AI is included and the page states credits, a quota, requests per day or a multiple of another plan’s usage.
Own key	AI is offered with the user’s own key or model, alone or beside vendor credits.
Preview	A preview, trial allowance or reduced subset only.
Add-on or integration	AI is sold as a separate add-on, or only as an integration with a third-party AI service.
Absent (stated)	The page shows the plan without AI (a blank or crossed cell, or a statement that AI belongs to another plan).
Not stated	The page is silent on AI for this plan.

The *access restriction* is calculated from the class and the vendor’s other plans: none stated (Included), quota or credits (Metered), own key or credits, preview only, add-on or integration, tier-gated (Absent (stated) while another plan of the same vendor has AI), or not stated. The *tier group* of a plan is free, lowest-priced paid plan of its vendor, or higher-priced paid plan, computed from price order within the vendor. Each coding carries an evidence label: re-observed on 31 October 2026, partial (AI presence seen, item-level ticks not machine-readable), or carried only (the coding rests on the 21 October 2026 reading and could not be seen again).

For the AI classes, the vendor-page reading was made by the index publisher on 21 October 2026 (or, for the price-only records, from the page on 31 October 2026), and the mapping to classes was done by one coder, the study compiler, with the assistance described in Section 11. There was no second coder and no inter-rater agreement is reported. Nothing was tested: a class records what a page states, not how a product behaves. The class boundaries involve judgement. For example, an allowance stated without a figure is coded Included, so plans with similar wording can sit in different classes if only one page prints a number.

5.5 Testing a price step for AI

A price step between two plans of one vendor is read as the price associated with AI access only if the pair is valid: same vendor, adjacent tiers, same currency, same billing term, same seat basis, AI status determinate and re-observed on both plans, and the AI class moves from Absent (stated) to AI-capable. Otherwise the result is “no valid premium”. Even a valid pair bundles other changes (seat limits, rules, connectors, team features), so a step would be an upper bound on the price associated with AI access and not the price of AI.

5.6 Missing data and statistics

There is no imputation. A value the page did not show stays blank. Statistics are computed on the rows where the variable exists, each row reports its own number of plans, and the rate of missing or flagged values is reported by variable (Table 11). Statistics are descriptive: number of plans and vendors, minimum, median, maximum, and quartiles and interquartile range only where there are

at least eight plans (inclusive method). No confidence intervals, p-values or tests are computed: the sample is hand-picked, plans are clustered within vendors, and no stratum with a meaningful comparison is large enough. A vendor-level row, the median of each vendor’s plan prices, shows how much vendors with many tiers contribute to a statistic.

5.7 Reproducibility

The tables and figures in this paper are regenerated from the output files of the replication package (Section 11), not retyped. Every number in the text is tied to an entry of the package’s results file by a machine-checked map. All scripts use the Python standard library and no network access at analysis time.

6 Results

6.1 Price levels by billing term

Table 3 and Figure 1 give the price per seat per month on each plan’s own term. The 14 annual-billing plans (7 vendors, US dollars) have a minimum of \$4.17, a median of \$25.00 and a maximum of \$64.00; the quartiles are \$16.93 and \$35.25, and the interquartile range is \$18.32. When each vendor is given one value, the median of vendor medians is \$25.00 and the largest vendor median is \$50.50. The annual stratum is the only one with enough plans for quartiles.

The monthly-billing stratum is 3 plans from a single vendor (1), with prices from \$30.00 to \$120.00 (median \$45.00). The two-year stratum is also 3 plans from a single vendor, from \$4.54 to \$22.04 per month (median \$7.46). Because each of these strata is one vendor’s price ladder, neither says anything about vendors in general, and these strata must not be compared with one another: they differ in billing term, vendor and product.

Table 3: Price per seat per month on the plan’s own billing term, USD, paid plans, headline set. Terms are never pooled. “Vendor” rows give one value per vendor (median of the vendor’s plan prices); their statistics are over vendors’ medians.

Billing term	Level	Plans	Vendors	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max	IQR
Annual	plan	14	7	4.17	16.93	25.00	35.25	64.00	18.32
Annual	vendor	14	7	4.17	—	25.00	—	50.50	—
Monthly	plan	3	1	30.00	—	45.00	—	120.00	—
Monthly	vendor	3	1	45.00	—	45.00	—	45.00	—
Two-year	plan	3	1	4.54	—	7.46	—	22.04	—
Two-year	vendor	3	1	7.46	—	7.46	—	7.46	—

Quartiles and IQR only where there are at least eight plans (inclusive method). The monthly stratum is one vendor; the two-year stratum is one vendor. Source: [output/T02_price_by_term.csv](#).

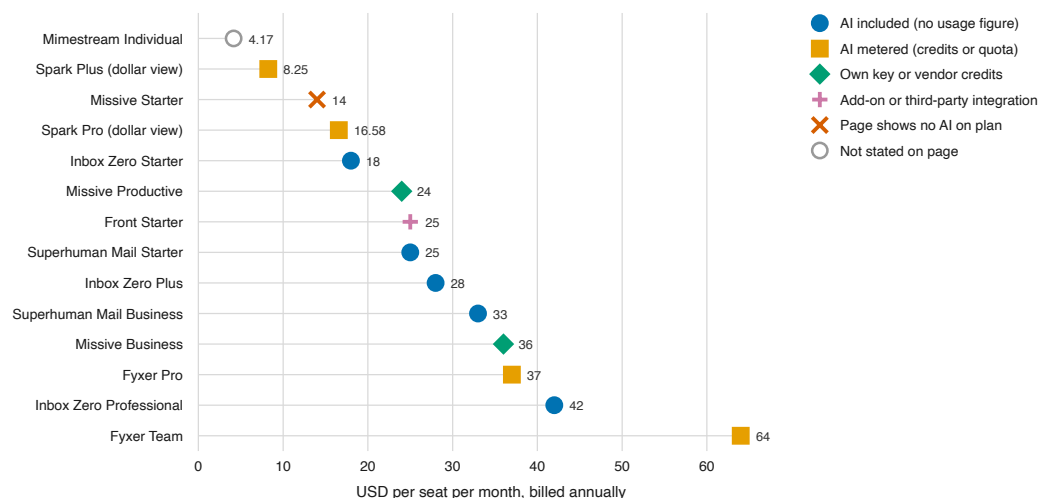
6.2 Annual cost for 1, 5 and 10 users

Table 4 converts prices to annual costs at list price. For the annual-billing stratum the median annual cost is \$300.00 for 1 user (range \$49.99 to \$768.00, 14 plans), \$1,500.00 for 5 users (range \$249.95 to \$3,840.00, 14 plans) and \$3,000.00 for 10 users (range \$499.90 to \$5,040.00, 12 plans). Fewer plans are available at 10 users than at 1 or 5, where a seat cap or a volume-quote rule applies. For the monthly-billing vendor, the median annual cost for 5 users is \$2,700.00. Plan-level costs are in Appendix Table 13, and Figure 2 plots the 5-user cost.

Price per seat per month, annual-billing plans, with AI class

n = 14 plans, 7 vendors; hand-picked sample, not representative

Data as of 31 October 2026. Vendors' own pricing pages. List prices, own currency, not converted.



Monthly-billing plans (Shortwave, n=3) and two-year plans (SaneBox, n=3) are not shown: billing terms are not pooled. Spark rows are dollar prices seen on 2026-10-31.

Figure 1: Price per seat per month of annual-billing plans (USD), with the AI class of each plan. Monthly-billing and two-year plans are not shown because billing terms are not pooled. Generated from the data of Table 3; the figure is a vector rendering of the corresponding figure in the replication package.

6.3 Annual versus monthly billing

Table 5 and Figure 3 cover plans that print both prices and for which both were re-observed. These are 11 plans from 5 vendors. The annual-billing price is below the monthly-billing price for every one of them. The median discount across plans is 20.0 percent (the median of vendor medians is 17.3 percent), with a range from 10.0 percent (Inbox Zero Starter) to 43.2 percent (SaneBox Lunch, comparing its one-year plan with monthly billing). For the same 11 plans the median monthly-billing price is \$20.00 and the median annual-billing price is \$18.00 per seat per month. Only 5 vendors enter this comparison, so the range across vendors, not the median, is the more informative statistic.

6.4 How AI access is arranged

Table 6 and Figure 4 classify the 24 headline plans. 16 are AI-capable: 8 Metered, 5 Included, 2 Own key and 1 Preview. A further 2 plans have AI only as an add-on or integration, 2 are coded Absent (stated), and 4 do not state AI. The AI-capable plans are 66.7 percent of the 24 plans and 88.9 percent of the plans whose AI status is determinate (that is, excluding Not stated and Add-on or integration). Both shares rest on a small, hand-picked set and are descriptive only.

By tier group, the 3 free plans split into 1 Metered, 1 Preview and 1 Absent (stated). Of the 10 lowest-priced paid plans (one per vendor), 5 are AI-capable (2 Included and 3 Metered), 2 are add-on or integration, 1 is Absent (stated) and 2 are Not stated. Of the 11 higher-priced paid plans (7 vendors), 9 are AI-capable (3 Included, 4 Metered, 2 Own key) and 2 are Not stated. The 2 plans coded Absent (stated), a free email app and one lowest-priced paid plan, both rest on the 21 October 2026 reading that could not be seen again; the share of AI-capable plans among re-observed codings is given in Section 7.

Table 7 shows where AI first appears for each vendor. Among the 10 vendors, 6 have at least

Table 4: Annual cost at list price for 1, 5 and 10 users, USD, own billing term, headline set. Plans unavailable at a user count (seat cap, minimum seats, volume quote) drop out of that row.

Billing term	Users	Plans	Vendors	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max	IQR
Annual	1	14	7	49.99	203.25	300.00	423.00	768.00	219.75
Annual	5	14	7	249.95	1,016.25	1,500.00	2,115.00	3,840.00	1,098.75
Annual	10	12	7	499.90	2,117.50	3,000.00	4,050.00	5,040.00	1,932.50
Monthly	1	3	1	360.00	—	540.00	—	1,440.00	—
Monthly	5	3	1	1,800.00	—	2,700.00	—	7,200.00	—
Monthly	10	3	1	3,600.00	—	5,400.00	—	14,400.00	—
Two-year	1	3	1	54.50	—	89.50	—	264.50	—
Two-year	5	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Two-year	10	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—

The two-year stratum is priced per subscription and is excluded for the larger user counts; dashes mark an empty row.

Source: [output/T04_cost_statistics.csv](#).

one AI-capable plan in the headline set and 4 have none: their pages state AI only as an add-on or integration, or do not state it. For the 6 vendors, the lowest-priced AI-capable plan is a free plan for 2 vendors, the vendor’s lowest-priced paid plan for 3, and a higher-priced paid plan for 1. Where AI first appears depends on which tiers are in the dataset (Section 4), so this is a statement about the dataset’s ladders and not about vendors’ full ranges. The restrictions that occur are quota or credits, own key or credits, preview only, add-on or integration, and tier-gating; the most common is quota or credits, which matches the 8 Metered plans.

Some features of the coding deserve emphasis. First, the Included and Metered classes differ in whether the page prints a figure, not in how much AI a plan offers: a page that mentions an allowance without a figure is coded Included. Second, Table 8 shows that the price ranges of the Included and Metered classes overlap (Included: \$18.00 to \$42.00, median \$28.00; Metered: \$8.25 to \$64.00, median \$26.79, on annual billing). The classes differ in vendor, category and other features, so a difference between their medians would not be an AI premium, and the table is shown only to describe the data.

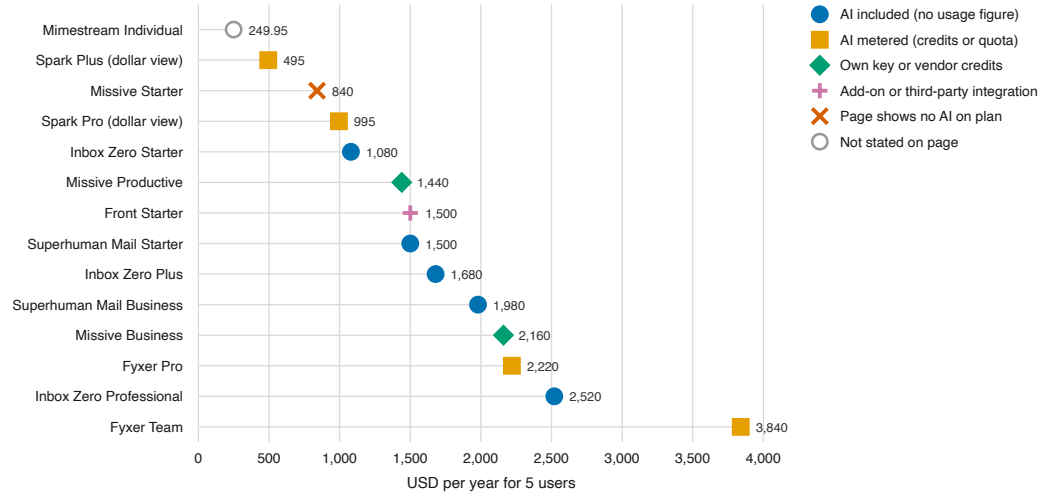
6.5 Price steps between adjacent tiers

Table 9 lists the 14 adjacent-tier pairs within the headline vendors and applies the validity test. 0 pairs are valid. In 2 pairs the AI class moves from Absent (stated) to AI-capable: Inbox Zero’s free email app to its Starter plan, which is a separate product line and not a tier of the AI ladder and whose lower-plan coding could not be re-observed, and Missive Starter to Productive. The Missive pair passes the structural tests (same vendor, adjacent tiers, same currency, term and seat basis) and the step is \$10.00 per seat per month (71.4 percent), but the lower plan’s coding of “no AI” rests on the 21 October 2026 reading and the higher plan’s coding is partial; it fails the evidence test, and 1 pair would be a candidate only if carried-over evidence were accepted. In all other pairs the AI class does not move from stated absence to AI access: both plans are already AI-capable, or the AI status of one or both plans is not determinate. **No AI price premium can therefore be computed from these data.** This is a statement about comparability: the posted plans do not allow the price associated with AI access to be separated from the other differences between plans. It is not a finding that such a price is absent, small or large.

Annual cost for 5 users, annual-billing plans, with AI class

n = 14 plans (7 vendors); hand-picked sample, not representative

Data as of 31 October 2026. Vendors' own pricing pages. List prices, own currency, not converted.



Annual cost = annual price per seat x 5 at list price. No volume discount is applied.

Figure 2: Annual cost for 5 users of annual-billing plans (USD), with AI class. Plan-level costs for 1, 5 and 10 users are in Appendix Table 13.

Table 5: Annual-billing versus monthly-billing price per seat per month (USD), plans that print both prices and for which both were re-observed on 31 October 2026.

Vendor	Plan	Monthly billing	Annual billing	Annual discount (%)	Saving per seat per year	Extra two-year discount (%)
Fyxe	Pro	49.00	37.00	24.50	144.00	—
Fyxe	Team	99.00	64.00	35.40	420.00	—
Inbox Zero	Starter	20.00	18.00	10.00	24.00	—
Inbox Zero	Plus	35.00	28.00	20.00	84.00	—
Inbox Zero	Professional	50.00	42.00	16.00	96.00	—
Mimestream	Individual	4.99	4.17	16.50	9.89	—
SaneBox	Snack	9.49	5.42	42.90	48.84	16.20
SaneBox	Lunch	15.99	9.08	43.20	82.92	17.80
SaneBox	Dinner	42.99	26.58	38.20	196.92	17.10
Spark	Plus (dollar view)	10.00	8.25	17.50	21.00	—
Spark	Pro (dollar view)	20.00	16.58	17.10	41.04	—
Median over plans	n = 11; 5 vendors	—	—	20.00	—	—
Median of vendor medians	n = 5; 5 vendors	—	—	17.30	—	—

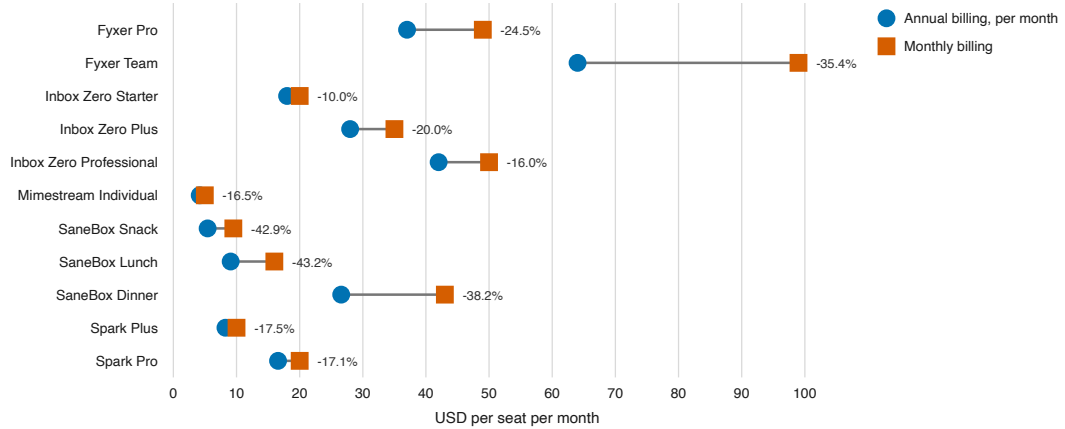
Discount = (monthly price – annual-equivalent monthly price) / monthly price. Where a plan has a two-year price, the last column is the further discount relative to the monthly price. Superhuman and Missive are not shown: their monthly prices were not visible on the capture date (sensitivity S7). Source:

[output/T05_annual_vs_monthly_billing.csv](#).

Monthly-billing versus annual-billing price per seat per month

Plans that publish both prices on the page: n = 11 plans, 5 vendors. Label = annual discount.

Data as of 31 October 2026. Both prices re-observed that day. USD. Hand-picked sample; no test of significance.



SaneBox annual figure is the one-year plan; its two-year price is lower still. Superhuman and Missive are absent; their monthly prices were not visible on 2026-10-31.

Figure 3: Monthly-billing and annual-billing price per seat per month (USD) for plans that print both prices, with the annual discount as the label. Hand-picked sample; no test of significance. The two-year prices are in Table 5.

Table 6: AI functionality class by tier group (counts of plans). Free = free plan; lowest-priced paid = the vendor’s lowest-priced paid plan in the dataset; higher-priced = other paid plans. AI-capable = Included, Metered, Own key or Preview.

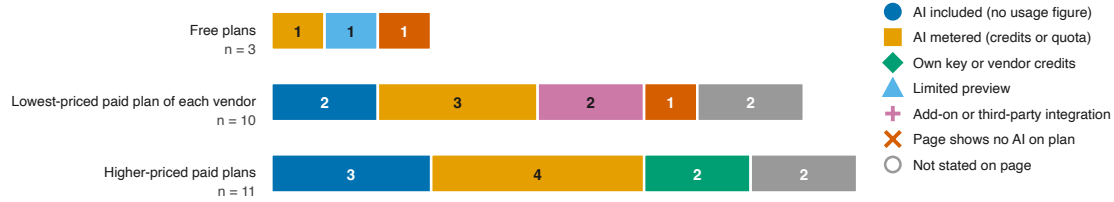
Tier group	Plans	Vend.	Incl.	Met.	Own key	Prev.	Add-on	Absent	Not stated	AI-capable	% of all	% of determ.
<i>Headline set</i>												
Free	3	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	66.70	66.70
Lowest-priced paid	10	10	2	3	0	0	2	1	2	5	50.00	83.30
Higher-priced paid	11	7	3	4	2	0	0	0	2	9	81.80	100.00
All	24	10	5	8	2	1	2	2	4	16	66.70	88.90
<i>Same, plans with AI evidence re-observed on 31 October 2026 only</i>												
Free	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	100.00	100.00
Lowest-priced paid	8	8	2	3	0	0	2	0	1	5	62.50	100.00
Higher-priced paid	9	6	3	4	2	0	0	0	0	9	100.00	100.00
All	19	9	5	8	2	1	2	0	1	16	84.20	100.00

“Determinate” excludes plans whose AI status is Not stated or Add-on or integration. Shares are percentages of plans in the row; with so few plans per row they are descriptive only. Absent (stated) requires explicit negative evidence on the page; Not stated is never read as absence. Source: [output/T07_ai_by_tier.csv](#).

AI functionality class by tier group

Verified plans: n = 24 plans, 10 vendors. Bar length = number of plans.

Data as of 31 October 2026. Class = researcher coding of the vendor's own page; 'Not stated' is not evidence of absence.



Tier group is computed from price order within a vendor (verified plans only). Counts, not shares; no significance test is run.

Figure 4: AI functionality class by tier group, headline set. Bar length is the number of plans. Class is the researcher's coding of the vendor's own page; Not stated is not evidence of absence.

Table 7: AI functionality by vendor, headline set: where AI is first stated and which restriction types occur.

Vendor	Category	Plans	AI-capable	Lowest-priced capable plan (price per seat per month)	AI- AI classes present	Access restrictions present
Front	Shared inbox	1	0	none	Add-on or integration	Add-on or integration
Fyxr	Assistant	3	3	Free (0.00, USD, free)	Metered	Quota or credits
Inbox Zero	Client	4	3	Starter (18.00, USD, annual)	Absent (stated); Included	None stated; Tier-gated
Mailbird	Client	1	0	none	Add-on or integration	Add-on or integration
Mimestream	Client	1	0	none	Not stated	Not stated
Missive	Shared inbox	3	2	Productive (24.00, USD, annual)	Absent (stated); Own key	Own key or credits; Tier-gated
SaneBox	Filter	3	0	none	Not stated	Not stated
Shortwave	Client	3	3	Business (30.00, USD, monthly)	Metered	Quota or credits
Spark	Client	3	3	Free (0.00, USD, free)	Preview; Metered	Preview only; Quota or credits
Superhuman Mail	Client	2	2	Starter (25.00, USD, annual)	Included	None stated

A plan is AI-capable if it is coded Included, Metered, Own key or Preview. "none" = no plan of the vendor in the headline set is AI-capable; this includes vendors whose pages state AI only as an add-on or integration, or do not state it. Source: [output/T08_ai_by_vendor.csv](#).

Table 8: Price per seat per month (USD) by AI class and billing term, paid plans, headline set. Description only; not an AI premium.

Billing term	AI class	Plans	Vendors	Median	Min	Max
Annual	Included	5	2	28.00	18.00	42.00
Annual	Metered	4	2	26.79	8.25	64.00
Annual	Own key	2	1	30.00	24.00	36.00
Annual	Add-on or integration	1	1	25.00	25.00	25.00
Annual	Absent (stated)	1	1	14.00	14.00	14.00
Annual	Not stated	1	1	4.17	4.17	4.17
Monthly	Metered	3	1	45.00	30.00	120.00
Two-year	Not stated	3	1	7.46	4.54	22.04

Classes differ in vendor, product category and other features, so differences between classes are not an AI premium.

Source: [output/T12_price_by_ai_class.csv](#).

Table 9: Adjacent-tier pairs within a vendor and the validity test for reading a price step as the price associated with AI access.

Vendor	Lower plan	Higher plan	Step (USD)	Step (%)	AI class, lower	AI class, higher	AI lower / higher	evidence, Valid	Reason the pair is not valid
Fyxr	Free	Pro	37.00	—	Metered	Metered	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Fyxr	Pro	Team	27.00	73.00	Metered	Metered	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Inbox Zero	Email app (free)	Starter	18.00	—	Absent (stated)	Included	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
							Carried only	/ No	lower plan is a separate product line (free email app), not a tier of the AI ladder; AI coding of a plan could not be re-observed on 2026-10-31 (carried-over reading only)
Inbox Zero	Starter	Plus	10.00	55.60	Included	Included	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Inbox Zero	Plus	Professional	14.00	50.00	Included	Included	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Missive	Starter	Productive	10.00	71.40	Absent (stated)	Own key	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
							Carried only	/ No	AI coding of a plan could not be re-observed on 2026-10-31 (carried-over reading only)
							Partial	/ No	AI coding of a plan could not be re-observed on 2026-10-31 (carried-over reading only)
Missive	Productive	Business	12.00	50.00	Own key	Own key	Partial / Partial	No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
SaneBox	Snack	Lunch	2.92	64.30	Not stated	Not stated	Carried only	/ No	AI status of one plan not determinate; AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable; AI coding of a plan could not be re-observed on 2026-10-31 (carried-over reading only)
							Carried only	/ No	AI status of one plan not determinate; AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable; AI coding of a plan could not be re-observed on 2026-10-31 (carried-over reading only)
SaneBox	Lunch	Dinner	14.58	195.40	Not stated	Not stated	Carried only	/ No	AI status of one plan not determinate; AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable; AI coding of a plan could not be re-observed on 2026-10-31 (carried-over reading only)
							Carried only	/ No	AI status of one plan not determinate; AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable; AI coding of a plan could not be re-observed on 2026-10-31 (carried-over reading only)
Shortwave	Business	Premier	15.00	50.00	Metered	Metered	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Shortwave	Premier	Max	75.00	166.70	Metered	Metered	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Spark	Free	Plus (dollar view)	8.25	—	Preview	Metered	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Spark	Plus (dollar view)	Pro (dollar view)	8.33	101.00	Metered	Metered	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
Superhuman Mail	Starter	Business	8.00	32.00	Included	Included	Re-observed	/ No	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable
							Partial / observed	Re-	AI class does not move from stated-absent to AI-capable

Step = difference in price per seat per month between the plans of a pair on their own terms; free-to-paid steps have no percentage. A pair is valid only if: same vendor, adjacent tiers, same currency, same billing term, same seat basis, AI status determinate and re-observed on both plans, and the AI class moves from stated-absent to AI-capable. The pair Missive Starter to Productive passes the structural tests but its lower-plan coding could not be re-observed. Source:

[output/T09_adjacent_tier_pairs.csv](#).

7 Robustness and sensitivity

Each scenario in Table 10 changes one inclusion rule relative to the headline (S0). S1 adds the plans flagged Unverified, using the index records’ values. S2 converts the verified euro plan to dollars at the dated rate; S3 also converts the unverified euro plans. S4 drops the 2 supplement rows. S5 compares monthly-billing and annual-billing prices for plans that print both. S6 adds the Superhuman and Missive monthly prices that were recorded on 21 October 2026 but not visible on 31 October 2026.

For the price per seat per month on annual billing, the headline (S0) is 14 plans, minimum \$4.17, median \$25.00. Adding the unverified plans (S1) leaves the annual stratum unchanged (median \$25.00); in the monthly stratum it enlarges the set to 5 plans from 2 vendors and lowers the minimum to \$18.00. Converting the euro plan (S2) leaves the median at \$25.00; also converting the unverified euro plans (S3) gives \$24.00. Dropping the supplement rows (S4) gives 12 plans from 6 vendors and a median of \$26.50. The headline median therefore moves between \$24.00 and \$26.50 across the scenarios, and the median annual cost for 5 users moves with it (from \$1,440.00 in S3 to \$1,590.00 in S4, against \$1,500.00 in S0). For annual versus monthly billing, S6 gives a median discount of 20.0 percent if the unseen monthly prices are right (range 16.7 to 22.2 percent, 5 plans from 2 vendors).

AI classes. Restricting the AI counts to plans whose AI evidence was re-observed on 31 October 2026 leaves 19 plans from 9 vendors, of which 16 are AI-capable (84.2 percent). This subset removes every plan coded Absent (stated) and all but 1 of the Not stated plans, because those codings rest on the earlier reading, so the higher share partly reflects which plans could be re-observed.

Missing and flagged data. Table 11 shows that, in the headline set, at least one of the annual-billing and monthly-billing prices was not re-observed for 10 of 21 paid plans (47.6 percent), the AI class rests on the carried-over reading only for 5 of 24 plans (20.8 percent), and the AI class is Not stated for 4 of 24 plans. These rates bound how much weight the AI counts and the billing comparison can bear.

Table 10: Sensitivity of the headline statistics to the inclusion rules (USD; each scenario changes one rule; scenarios are defined in the text).

Scenario	Metric	Stratum	Plans	Vend.	Min	Median	Max
S0 headline	Price/seat/month	annual	14	7	4.17	25.00	64.00
S1 incl. UNVERIFIED	Price/seat/month	annual	14	7	4.17	25.00	64.00
S2 EUR converted (verified)	Price/seat/month	annual	15	8	2.75	25.00	64.00
S3 EUR converted incl. UNVERIFIED	Price/seat/month	annual	17	8	2.75	24.00	64.00
S4 excl. supplement rows	Price/seat/month	annual	12	6	4.17	26.50	64.00
S0 headline	Annual cost, 5 users	annual	14	7	249.95	1,500.00	3,840.00
S1 incl. UNVERIFIED	Annual cost, 5 users	annual	14	7	249.95	1,500.00	3,840.00
S2 EUR converted (verified)	Annual cost, 5 users	annual	15	8	164.90	1,500.00	3,840.00
S3 EUR converted incl. UNVERIFIED	Annual cost, 5 users	annual	17	8	164.90	1,440.00	3,840.00
S4 excl. supplement rows	Annual cost, 5 users	annual	12	6	249.95	1,590.00	3,840.00
S0 headline	Price/seat/month	monthly	3	1	30.00	45.00	120.00
S1 incl. UNVERIFIED	Price/seat/month	monthly	5	2	18.00	30.00	120.00

Scenario	Metric	Stratum	Plans	Vend.	Min	Median	Max
S2 EUR converted (verified)	Price/seat/month	monthly	3	1	30.00	45.00	120.00
S3 EUR converted incl. UNVERIFIED	Price/seat/month	monthly	5	2	18.00	30.00	120.00
S4 excl. supplement rows	Price/seat/month	monthly	3	1	30.00	45.00	120.00
S0 headline	Annual cost, 5 users	monthly	3	1	1,800.00	2,700.00	7,200.00
S1 incl. UNVERIFIED	Annual cost, 5 users	monthly	5	2	1,080.00	1,800.00	7,200.00
S2 EUR converted (verified)	Annual cost, 5 users	monthly	3	1	1,800.00	2,700.00	7,200.00
S3 EUR converted incl. UNVERIFIED	Annual cost, 5 users	monthly	5	2	1,080.00	1,800.00	7,200.00
S4 excl. supplement rows	Annual cost, 5 users	monthly	3	1	1,800.00	2,700.00	7,200.00
S5 monthly basis	Price/seat/month, monthly billing	monthly billing	11	5	4.99	20.00	99.00
S5 annual basis (same plans)	Price/seat/month, annual billing	annual billing	11	5	4.17	18.00	64.00
S6 records-only other-term prices	Annual discount median (%)	annual vs monthly	5	2	16.70	20.00	22.20

S0 is the headline. Euro conversion is applied only in S2 and S3. Source: [output/T11_sensitivity.csv](#).

Table 11: Missing-data and flagged-data rates by variable, for all dataset rows and for the headline set (the plans that passed verification).

Variable	Population	Applicable	Missing or flagged	Rate (%)
monthly-billing price re-observed (paid plans)	all 30 rows	26	12	46.20
monthly-billing price re-observed (paid plans)	headline set	21	7	33.30
annual-billing price re-observed (paid plans)	all 30 rows	26	8	30.80
annual-billing price re-observed (paid plans)	headline set	21	3	14.30
both billing-term prices re-observed (paid plans)	all 30 rows	26	15	57.70
both billing-term prices re-observed (paid plans)	headline set	21	10	47.60
billing term determinable (paid plans)	all 30 rows	26	1	3.80
billing term determinable (paid plans)	headline set	21	0	0.00
billing term printed rather than inferred (paid plans)	all 30 rows	26	14	53.80
billing term printed rather than inferred (paid plans)	headline set	21	9	42.90
AI class not stated	all 30 rows	30	4	13.30
AI class not stated	headline set	24	4	16.70
AI class resting on carried-over reading only	all 30 rows	30	7	23.30
AI class resting on carried-over reading only	headline set	24	5	20.80
agent connector not stated	all 30 rows	30	22	73.30
agent connector not stated	headline set	24	16	66.70
shared-inbox / team features not stated	all 30 rows	30	6	20.00
shared-inbox / team features not stated	headline set	24	4	16.70
email providers not stated	all 30 rows	30	5	16.70
email providers not stated	headline set	24	3	12.50
trial days not stated	all 30 rows	24	9	37.50
trial days not stated	headline set	19	7	36.80
plan price verified (verified or partly verified)	all 30 rows	30	6	20.00
plan price verified (verified or partly verified)	headline set	24	0	0.00

“Missing or flagged” means the value could not be observed, was not stated by the vendor, or rests on an unverified reading; it does not mean the vendor lacks the feature. Source: [output/T10_missing_data.csv](#).

8 Discussion

What the record shows. In this set of plans, annual billing is the most common listed term in the headline set, annual-billing plans print a price below the monthly price wherever both are printed, and among AI-capable plans an allowance of credits or quota is the most frequent single arrangement (8 of 16). The AI statements describe the 24 headline plans, and the billing comparison describes the 11 plans from 5 vendors that print both prices. The same word on a pricing page can cover different arrangements, and the classes used here record what a page states about limits rather than what a plan delivers.

Why the price of AI cannot be isolated here. The title of this paper uses the phrase “price of AI functionality”. The main result is that this price cannot be read from posted plans in this set. AI access is stated at the free tier for some vendors and only at higher tiers for others, higher tiers differ in seat limits, rules, connectors and team features as well as AI, and for several plans the page does not state AI at all. Only 2 adjacent pairs move from stated absence to AI access, and neither is a valid test. A different design, for example a longitudinal capture around the date a vendor adds AI to an existing plan, or a larger set of plans with human-confirmed AI coding, could address a question this design cannot.

Relation to theory. The versioning, bundling and screening literature gives reasons vendors might offer plan ladders and gate features, and the usage-and-subscription literature gives reasons for allowances. We did not test any of these accounts. The data are descriptive and cannot distinguish them from one another or from other accounts, and we make no claim about why any vendor prices or bundles as it does.

What the results do not say. They do not say that any plan is good or poor value, that any price is high or low, that AI features raise or lower prices, that a vendor’s price is fair, or that the set represents a market. They do not describe what customers pay, since discounts, taxes, volume terms and negotiated prices are not observed. They do not describe usage or quality of any feature, since no product was tested.

9 Limitations

Sample. The sample is hand-picked from a commercial index with no written selection rule and is small and clustered: the largest stratum with a meaningful statistic is 14 plans from 7 vendors, each of the monthly-billing and two-year strata is a single vendor’s ladder. Products differ in kind (a client, an assistant layered on an existing client, a filter and shared-inbox tools are priced for different jobs), so a pooled median is a convenience of description. Tier ladders are incomplete because enterprise and some intermediate plans are not in the dataset.

Prices. Prices are vendor-stated list prices read from pages on one day by one tool class, from one network location. Transacted prices, discounts, taxes, reseller and app-store prices, regional pricing and add-ons are not observed. Promotions are flagged only where the page flags them. The only non-dollar prices are the euro-priced Mailbird plan and the Spark records priced in euros, and the converted scenarios are not a purchasing-power comparison.

Capture method. No scripts were run on the pages, so prices behind toggles or tabs that a page fills in with scripts are invisible; 6 plans could not be verified for this reason or because the record and the page conflict. A human browser read is stronger and was not done for those plans. An unreproduced record is unconfirmed, not shown to be wrong.

Classification. The AI classes were assigned by one coder, using the vendor’s own wording, and no second coder checked them. Not stated is not absent. Several codings rest on a reading that could not be repeated (Section 7). The agent-connector, team-feature and email-provider fields in the dataset were not re-checked row by row and are not used in this paper.

Time. The analysis is one cross-section. It says nothing about trends, price changes, or how long a plan has existed, and vendors may have changed pages between the first reading and the re-check, or since.

Post hoc design. The protocol was written after the data were first collected, so the choice of strata, the verification rule and the headline set could have been made differently. Table 10 shows how much the headline moves under the alternatives.

Commercial relationship and safeguards. The index’s publisher, the author’s company, chose the vendors and wrote the first reading of the pages. Safeguards used: the exclusion rule described in Section 4, applied before the dataset is built; the scholarly dataset is separate from the commercial index and is not written back to it; vendors’ own pages were saved with hashes and the reason for each verification decision is written down; no plan was dropped to improve a result (6 are kept and flagged); and the paper makes no claim about relative quality or value. Safeguards not used: no independent coder, no pre-registration, no vendor right of reply and no check of vendors’ terms of use for page capture and quotation. A reader should treat the dataset as the author’s own, re-checked once, and not as independent research.

10 Conclusion

For a hand-picked set of 24 verified plans from 10 email productivity vendors, observed on 31 October 2026, list prices on annual billing run from \$4.17 to \$64.00 per seat per month with a median of \$25.00; annual billing is priced below monthly billing where both are printed; and 16 plans are coded as stating AI functionality, 8 of them with credits or quotas. The sample is not representative and the results describe it only. No adjacent-tier price step passes the validity test, so no price associated with AI access can be computed from these data. The dataset, the rules and the scripts are released so that others can check, extend or replace the record, and the open items (a second coder, a human read of the unverified plans, vendor review and a repeat observation) are listed in the Limitations.

11 Declarations

Data and code availability. The dataset of plans, prices and AI codings, the data dictionary, the protocol, the analysis scripts, the output tables and figures, and the checksums are archived under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence on Zenodo (DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23841631>). The raw captured vendor pages are not redistributed pending a check of

vendors’ terms of use; the dataset instead lists each source URL, capture date, SHA-256 hash and the short quotations used as evidence. The paper’s numbers are tied to the results file of that package by a machine-checked map. This version of the paper is identified as Preprint DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23841609>.

Competing interests. The author is affiliated with Donezo Inbox, which develops and sells an email client in the product category studied. The company also publishes the Email Software Value Index, a commercial price comparison from whose records the sample was drawn; the author’s company chose the vendors in the index and wrote the first reading of their pages. As a conflict-of-interest safeguard, the author’s company’s own product was deliberately excluded from the sample: its plans are removed by a fixed rule before the dataset is built and appear in no table, figure or statistic of this paper or its dataset. This paper does not report the index’s scores or rankings. The scholarly dataset was exported by script from the index’s records, and each plan was then re-checked against the vendor’s own page on the dates recorded in the dataset where that page could be read (plans that could not be re-checked are excluded from the headline statistics); the paper’s statistics are computed from that dataset, not from the index’s published tables, and the dataset is not served by the commercial site. The vendors were not consulted and have not reviewed this paper. The author declares no other competing interests.

Funding. No external funding.

Use of AI tools. An AI system, Claude (Anthropic), was used under the author’s direction for the following tasks: writing and debugging the scripts that process the pricing-page data and produce the tables and figures; mapping the vendor pages’ feature statements to the AI classes under the rules of the protocol; searching for and summarising the literature; drafting and editing the manuscript text; and building the consistency checks for numbers, references and wording. The AI system is not an author and has no authorship role. The author reviewed the output, including the numbers, tables, figures and references, and is responsible for the content.

Ethics. The study analyses publicly available product, pricing and feature information published by software vendors. It involves no human participants and no personal data.

Author contributions. Ankur Shrestha: conceptualisation, data curation, analysis, writing, and supervision of AI-assisted work.

Disclosure practice. Disclosing financial interests and the use of AI in research follows practice from medicine and research ethics, which we use by analogy and not as binding rules for this field [44, 45, 46].

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A Plan-level listings

Table 12: Plan-level listing, headline set (verified plans): price on the plan’s own term and AI coding.

Vendor	Plan	Tier group	Price per seat per AI class month		Access restric- tion	AI evidence
Front	Starter	Lowest-priced paid	25.00 USD, annual	Add-on or in- tegration	Add-on or inte- gration	Re- observed
Fyxr	Free	Free	0.00 USD, free	Metered	Quota or cred- its	Re- observed

Vendor	Plan	Tier group	Price per seat per month	AI class	Access restric- tion	AI evidence
Fyxxer	Pro	Lowest-priced paid	37.00 USD, annual	Metered	Quota or credits	Re-observed
Fyxxer	Team	Higher-priced paid	64.00 USD, annual	Metered	Quota or credits	Re-observed
Inbox Zero	Email app (free)	Free	0.00 USD, free	Absent (stated)	Tier-gated	Carried only
Inbox Zero	Starter	Lowest-priced paid	18.00 USD, annual	Included	None stated	Re-observed
Inbox Zero	Plus	Higher-priced paid	28.00 USD, annual	Included	None stated	Re-observed
Inbox Zero	Professional	Higher-priced paid	42.00 USD, annual	Included	None stated	Re-observed
Mailbird	Premium (yearly promo)	Lowest-priced paid	2.46 EUR, annual	Add-on or integration	Add-on or integration	Re-observed
Mimestream	Individual	Lowest-priced paid	4.17 USD, annual	Not stated	Not stated	Re-observed
Missive	Starter	Lowest-priced paid	14.00 USD, annual	Absent (stated)	Tier-gated	Carried only
Missive	Productive	Higher-priced paid	24.00 USD, annual	Own key	Own key or credits	Partial
Missive	Business	Higher-priced paid	36.00 USD, annual	Own key	Own key or credits	Partial
SaneBox	Snack	Lowest-priced paid	4.54 USD, two-year	Not stated	Not stated	Carried only
SaneBox	Lunch	Higher-priced paid	7.46 USD, two-year	Not stated	Not stated	Carried only
SaneBox	Dinner	Higher-priced paid	22.04 USD, two-year	Not stated	Not stated	Carried only
Shortwave	Business	Lowest-priced paid	30.00 USD, monthly	Metered	Quota or credits	Re-observed
Shortwave	Premier	Higher-priced paid	45.00 USD, monthly	Metered	Quota or credits	Re-observed
Shortwave	Max	Higher-priced paid	120.00 USD, monthly	Metered	Quota or credits	Re-observed
Spark	Free	Free	0.00 USD, free	Preview	Preview only	Re-observed
Spark	Plus (dollar view)	Lowest-priced paid	8.25 USD, annual	Metered	Quota or credits	Re-observed
Spark	Pro (dollar view)	Higher-priced paid	16.58 USD, annual	Metered	Quota or credits	Re-observed
Superhuman Mail	Starter	Lowest-priced paid	25.00 USD, annual	Included	None stated	Partial
Superhuman Mail	Business	Higher-priced paid	33.00 USD, annual	Included	None stated	Re-observed

Prices are list prices in the currency shown; the Mailbird plan is priced in euros and carries a promotional yearly price. Not stated is not evidence of absence. AI evidence: Re-observed = seen on the page on 31 October 2026; Partial = AI presence seen, item-level ticks not machine-readable; Carried only = relies on the 21 October 2026 browser reading and could not be seen again. Source: [output/T06_ai_by_plan.csv](#).

Table 13: Annual cost at list price for 1, 5 and 10 users, plan level, headline set. Own currency and own billing term; no volume discount applied.

Vendor	Plan	Term	Seat basis	Per seat per year	1 user	5 users	10 users
Front	Starter	Annual	per seat	300.00	300.00	1,500.00	3,000.00
Fyxr	Free	Free	free	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fyxr	Pro	Annual	per seat	444.00	444.00	2,220.00	4,440.00
Fyxr	Team	Annual	per seat	768.00	768.00	3,840.00	—
Inbox Zero	Email app (free)	Free	free	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Inbox Zero	Starter	Annual	per seat	216.00	216.00	1,080.00	2,160.00
Inbox Zero	Plus	Annual	per seat	336.00	336.00	1,680.00	3,360.00
Inbox Zero	Professional	Annual	per seat	504.00	504.00	2,520.00	5,040.00
Mailbird	Premium (yearly promo)	Annual	per seat	29.52	29.52	147.60	295.20
Mimestream	Individual	Annual	per seat	49.99	49.99	249.95	499.90
Missive	Starter	Annual	per seat	168.00	168.00	840.00	—
Missive	Productive	Annual	per seat	288.00	288.00	1,440.00	2,880.00
Missive	Business	Annual	per seat	432.00	432.00	2,160.00	4,320.00
SaneBox	Snack	Two-year	per subscription	54.50	54.50	272.50	545.00
SaneBox	Lunch	Two-year	per subscription	89.50	89.50	447.50	895.00
SaneBox	Dinner	Two-year	per subscription	264.50	264.50	1,322.50	2,645.00
Shortwave	Business	Monthly	per seat	360.00	360.00	1,800.00	3,600.00
Shortwave	Premier	Monthly	per seat	540.00	540.00	2,700.00	5,400.00
Shortwave	Max	Monthly	per seat	1,440.00	1,440.00	7,200.00	14,400.00
Spark	Free	Free	free	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Spark	Plus (dollar view)	Annual	per seat	99.00	99.00	495.00	990.00
Spark	Pro (dollar view)	Annual	per seat	199.00	199.00	995.00	1,990.00
Superhuman Mail	Starter	Annual	per seat	300.00	300.00	1,500.00	3,000.00
Superhuman Mail	Business	Annual	per seat	396.00	396.00	1,980.00	3,960.00

Dashes mark costs unavailable under the seat rules (a seat cap on one Missive plan; a volume quote required for Fyxr Team at larger team sizes). Mailbird is priced in euros. SaneBox is priced per subscription (covering several accounts of one person); N users are assumed to need N subscriptions and these plans are left out of the multi-user statistics. Source: [output/T03_annual_cost_1_5_10_users.csv](#).

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