GURU CONFERENCE 2026

AI Has Commoditised Copy. Now What?



Kath Pay
CEO, Holistic Email Marketing · Author, Holistic Email Marketing



ABOUT ME

27 years obsessed with why people click

Email marketing strategist

Behavioural science + testing

Founder, Holistic Email Marketing

Author, Holistic Email Marketing

ANA/EEC Thought Leader of the Year

LAST YEAR, I SAID THIS…

“Don’t just use AI to write faster. Use it to become a smarter marketer.”

Treat AI as a psychology coach, not a copy machine.

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BUT SOMETHING HAS CHANGED

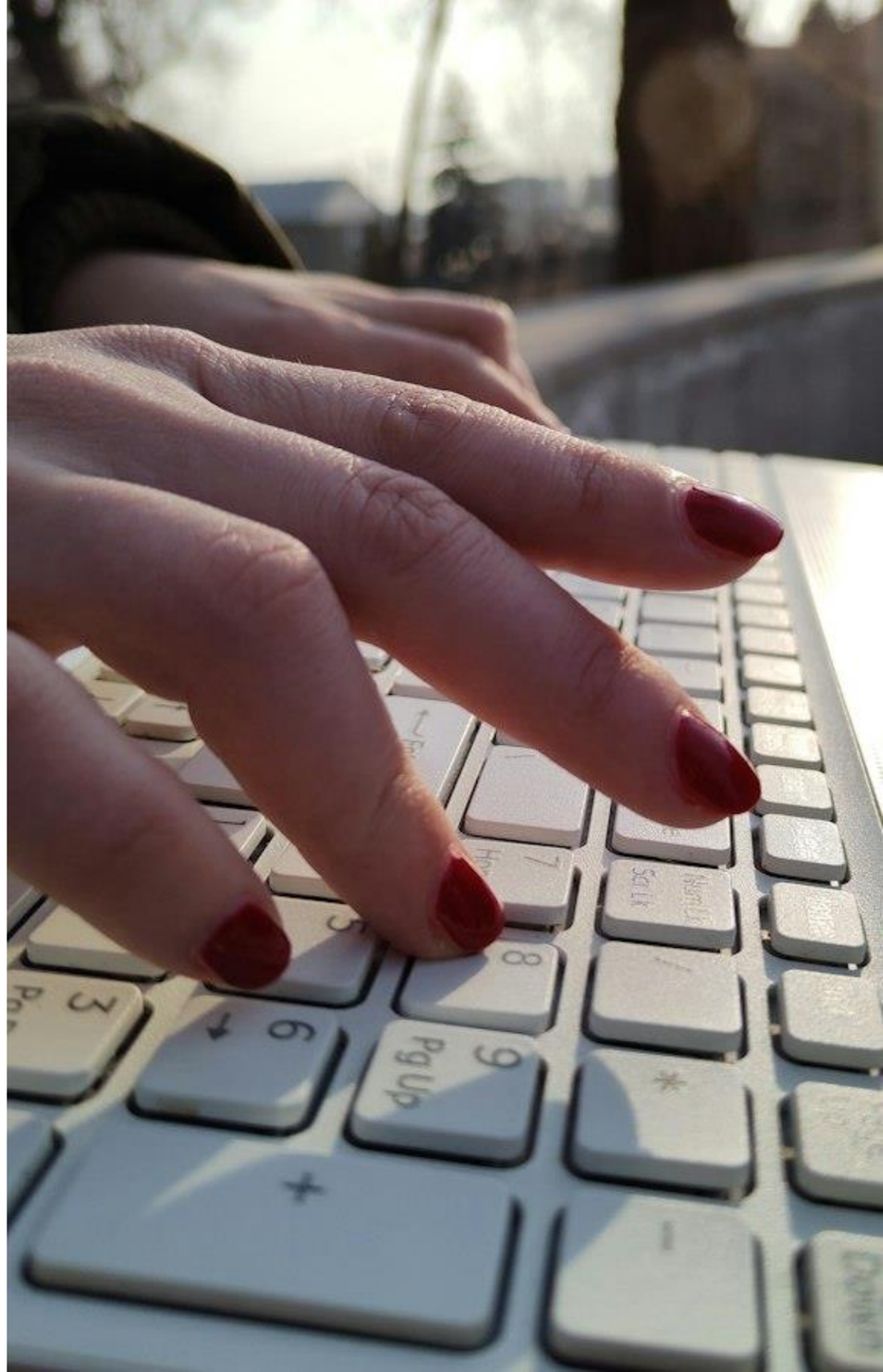
Everyone has AI now.

Good copy is easier.

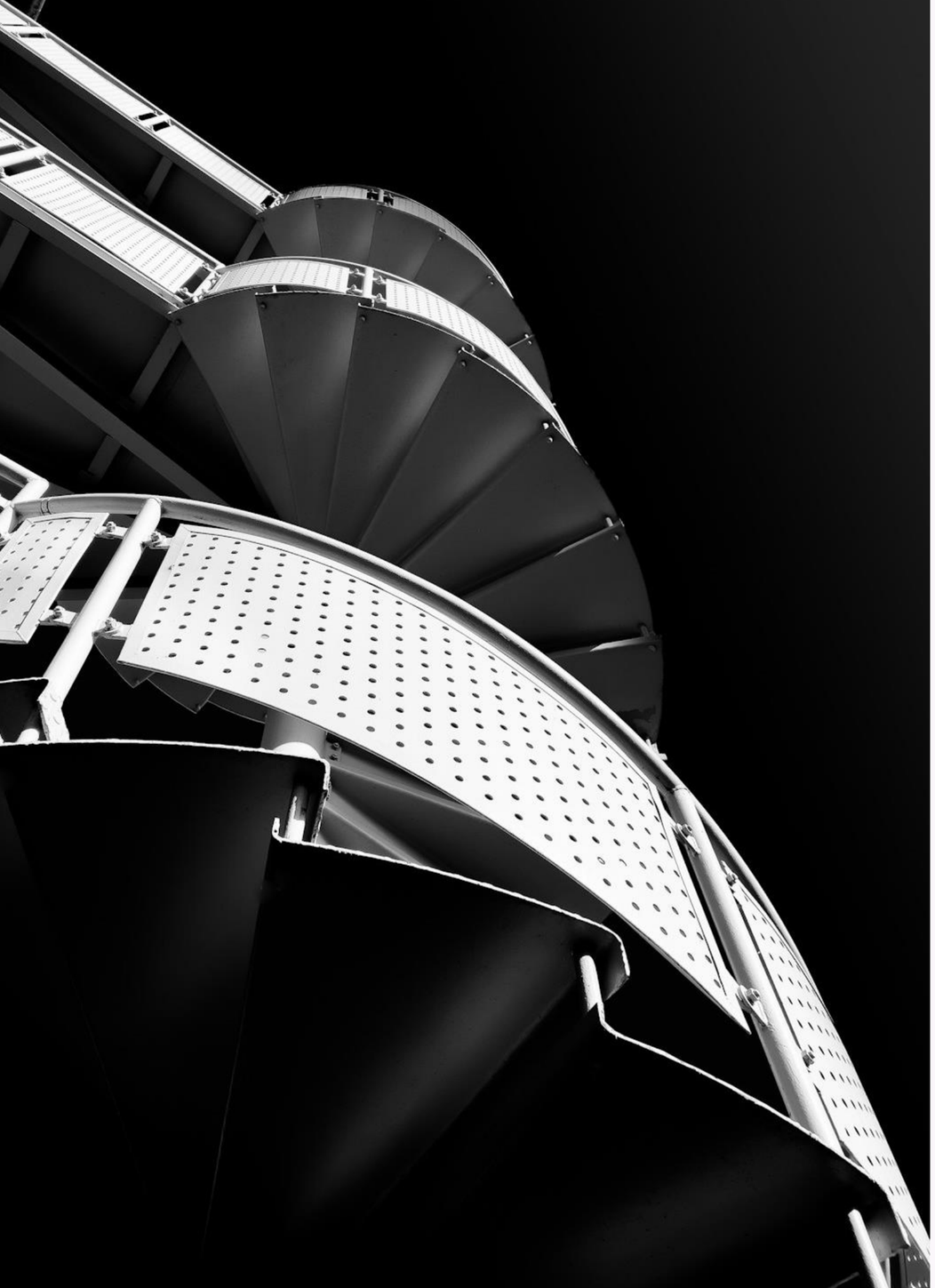
Fast copy is cheaper.

Average copy is everywhere.

Competence is no longer a competitive advantage.



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AI has raised the floor.

↓

Psychology raises the ceiling.

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5 behavioural science principles you can steal today

All spotted in real emails from my inbox.

- **Processing Fluency**
- **Goal Gradient Effect**
- **Effort Heuristic**
- **Numerical Precision**
- **Endowment Effect**



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1

ILLUMINATE

Velvet Love Pencil
Metallic Champagne
Wash across the lid to brighten your eyes.



2

DEFINE

Velvet Love Pencil
Metallic Chocolate
Glide along the lash line - it holds all day.



3

OPEN

Ooh la Lash Mascara
Lifts, separates and holds the curl, lash by lash.

PRINCIPLE 1 · PROCESSING FLUENCY - ZOEVA

Why does this feel so easy?

Three steps, three minutes

1 Illuminate

2 Define

3 Open

ZOEVA
Subject: Get the look in 3 easy steps
Preheader: Illuminate, Define, Open

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REVEAL · PRINCIPLE 1

Processing Fluency

The easier something is to process, the easier it can feel to engage with.

What ZOEVA did

Three steps, one action at a time

Visual demonstration, one product per step

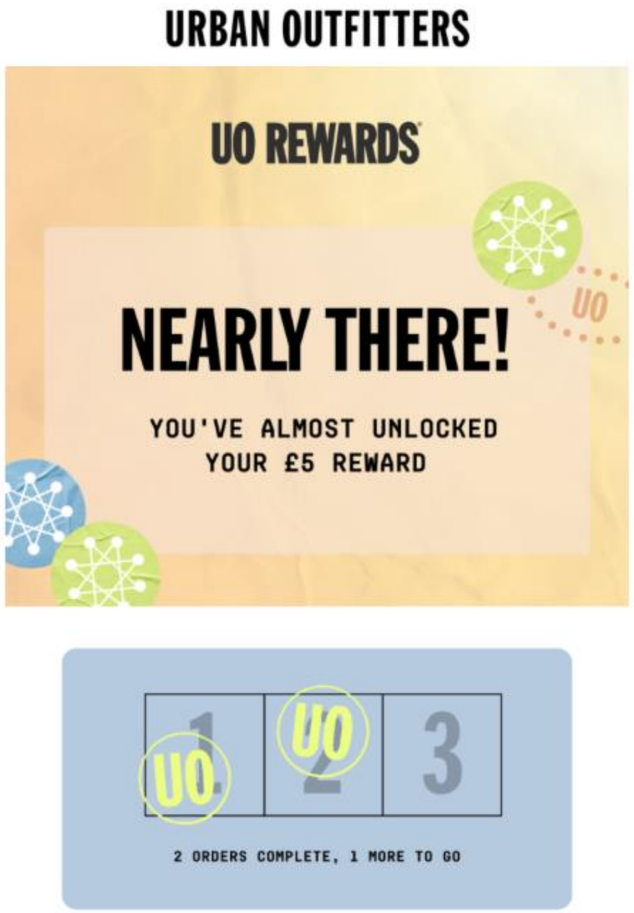
Minimal mental effort

STEAL THIS

Don’t just simplify the copy. Simplify the task.

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Which feels more motivating?



You have completed 2 purchases

versus

Just 1 purchase to go

UO REWARDS
Subject: Nearly there! ·
Preheader: You've almost unlocked your £5 reward

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REVEAL · PRINCIPLE 2

The Goal Gradient Effect

Motivation tends to increase as we feel ourselves getting closer to a goal.

Where this applies

Loyalty · Onboarding · Profile completion

Cart thresholds · Subscriptions

Example: Instead of

650 points earned

Try

Only 350 points until your £10 reward

STEAL THIS

Show the distance remaining, not just the progress made.

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IT REALLY DOES START WITH ONE SIMPLE STITCH

These are a few sashiko samplers I've been working on. As you may know or not, I love colour, so I have stitched these with lovely bright threads.

Some of the patterns may look complicated, but they are all made using a simple running stitch and a little weaving too. Trust me when I say you don't need to be good at stitching, particularly creative or wonderfully patient!

The patterns are first carefully drawn onto a grid, which helps you build up and follow the pattern. And, if I'm honest, part of the patience comes before you even start stitching, drawing out all those lines takes time too. Breathe... 😉

One stitch at a time, and gradually the pattern begins to appear.

PS: there are easier ways to create your grids, but that's for another day!

PRINCIPLE 3 · THE EFFORT HEURISTIC - BHOEME

Why does seeing the process change the value?

> *"The patterns are first carefully drawn onto a grid..."*

> *"One stitch at a time..."*

BBOHEME
Subject: One stitch at a time
Preheader: It really does start with one simple stitch

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REVEAL · PRINCIPLE 3

The Effort Heuristic

When quality is hard to judge, we use perceived effort as a shortcut for value.

AI says: Expertly handcrafted

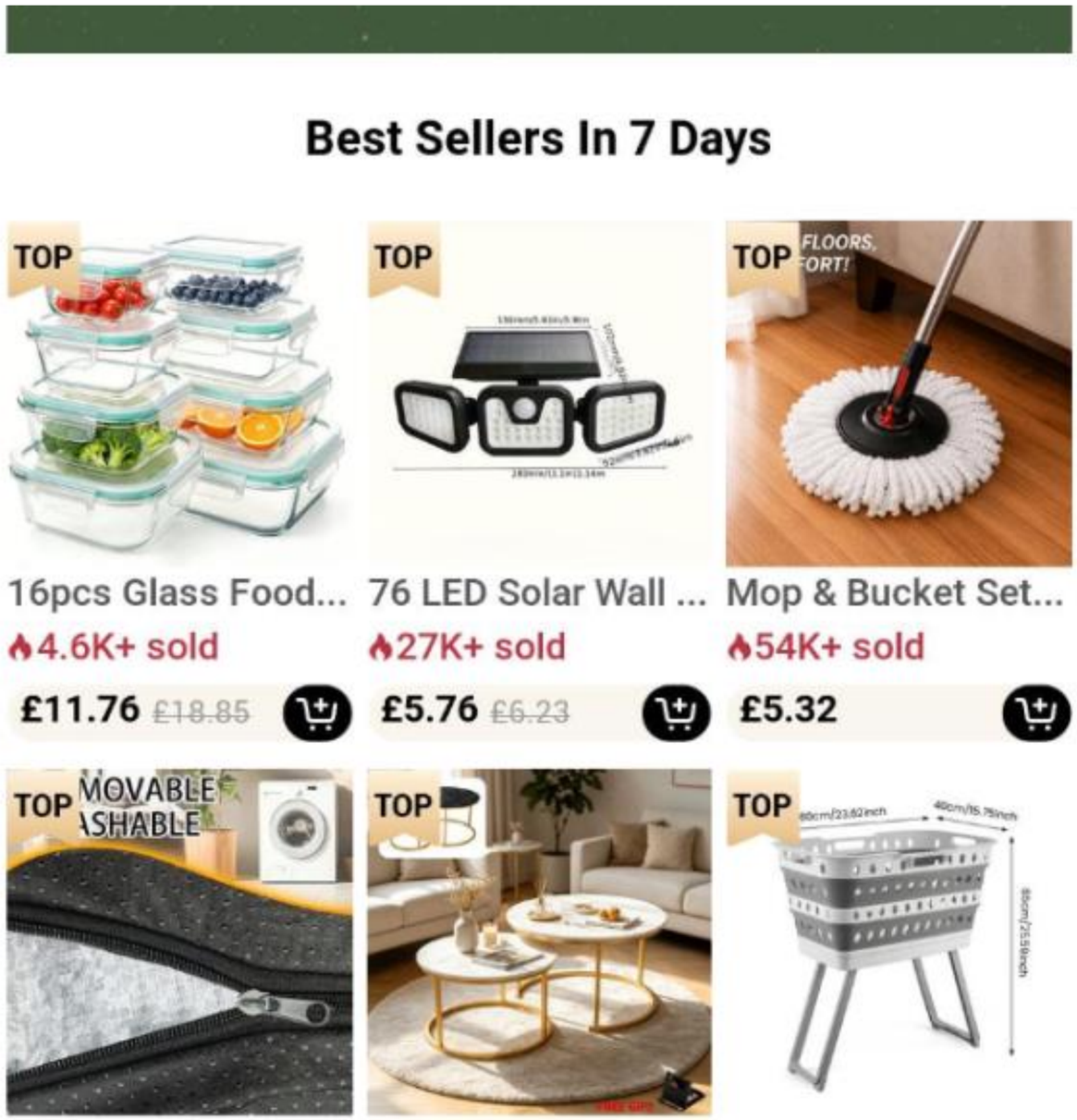
Evidence says: One stitch at a time

Example: 18 months in development · 31 prototypes · Hand-finished · 72-hour fermentation

STEAL THIS

Show the work behind the value.

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PRINCIPLE 4 · THE POWER OF NUMERICAL PRECISION - TEMU

584 sold

517 sold · 4.6K+ sold · 27K+ sold

Which feels more like observed data?

500+ sold or **584 sold**

Temu
Subject: Best sellers, flying off the shelves
Preheader: 584 sold in the last 24 hours

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REVEAL · PRINCIPLE 4

The Power of Numerical Precision

Specific numbers can make claims feel measured rather than merely asserted.

AI: Thousands of customers love it.

Evidence: 2,417 customers rated it 4.8/5.

AI: Save hours every week.

Evidence: Customers save an average of 3.4 hours.

STEAL THIS

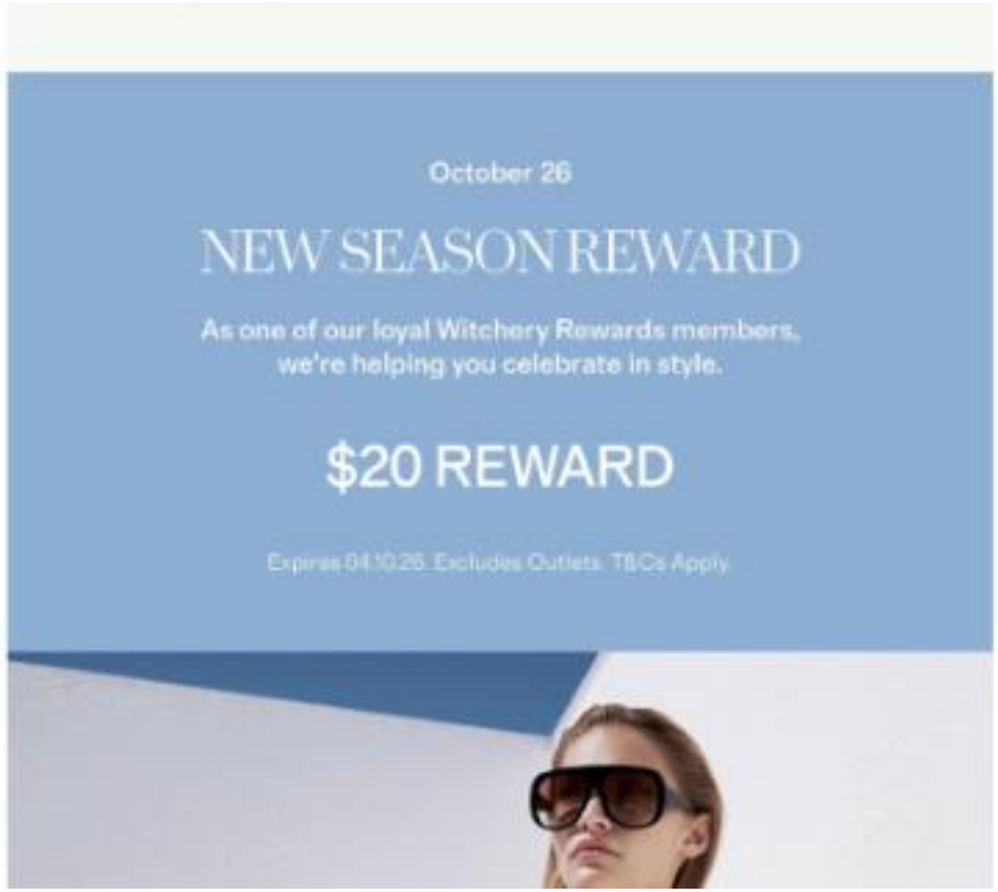
Replace vague claims with measured ones.

AI says “popular”. Data says “584 sold”.

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PRINCIPLE 5 · THE ENDOWNMENT EFFECT - WITCHERY

Which feels more valuable?



Get $20 off

versus

Your $20 reward has arrived

Witchery
Subject: Your $20 reward has arrived
Preheader: It's here, and it's waiting for you

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REVEAL · PRINCIPLE 5

The Endowment Effect

Once something feels like ours, we tend to value it more.

Examples:

Get £10 off → **Your £10 reward is ready**

Free delivery available → **You've unlocked free delivery**

Only use ownership language when the benefit genuinely belongs to them.

STEAL THIS

Make the benefit feel owned before asking for action.

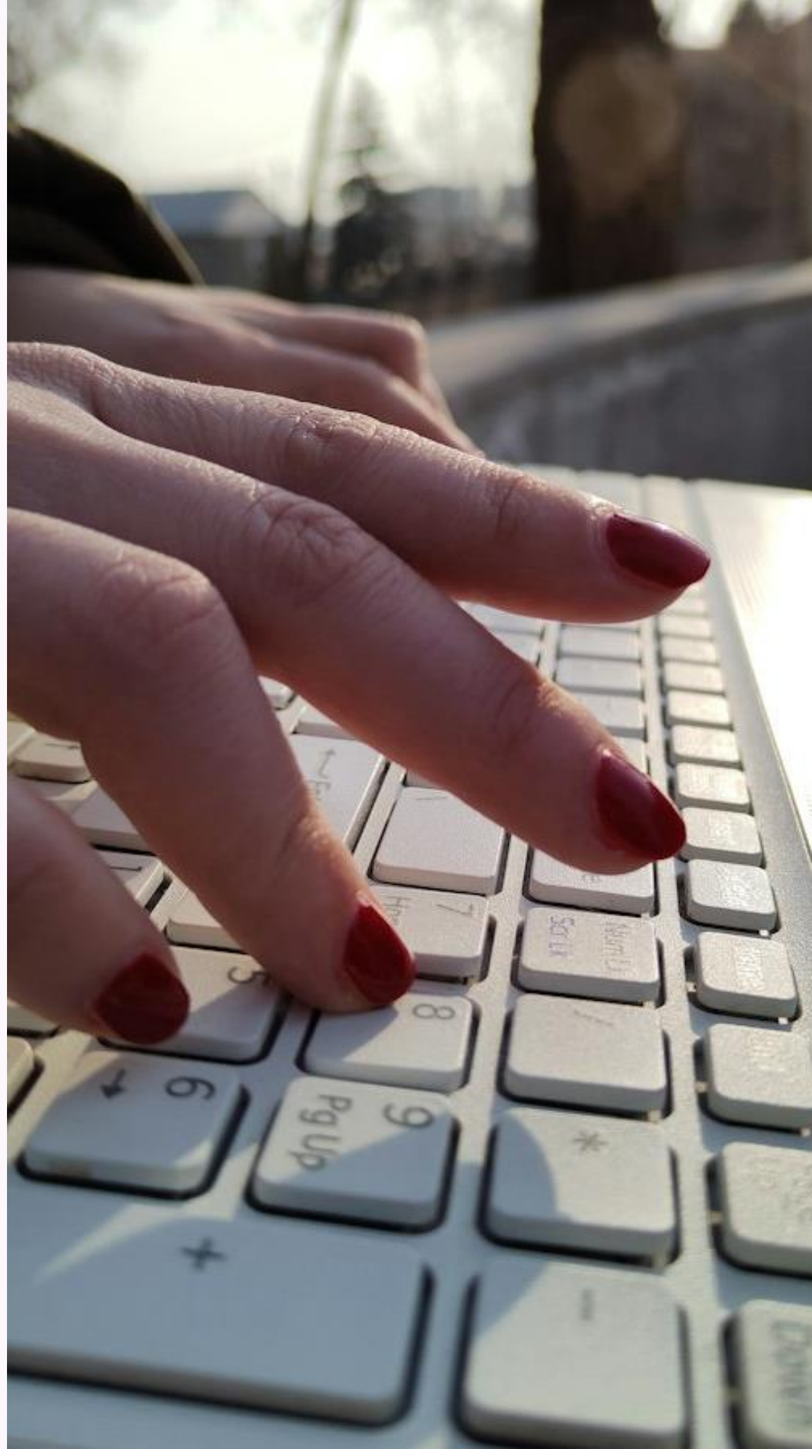
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PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Brief AI after you've made the behavioural decision.

Can I reduce cognitive effort?	→ **Processing Fluency**
Can I make progress visible?	→ **Goal Gradient**
Can I show the effort behind the value?	→ **Effort Heuristic**
Can I replace adjectives with evidence?	→ **Numerical Precision**
Can I create genuine ownership?	→ **Endowment Effect**

Then ask AI to help execute it.



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AI can write the email.

Psychology helps you decide what’s worth writing.

AI raises the floor. Psychology raises the ceiling.



Thank You

Kath Pay

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Find me on LinkedIn

Understand the human behind the click.