



[Back to Nylas Blogs](#)

The Nylas Engineering Blog



Nylas Pro

Announcing new features
and a premium version of N1.

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Email is the database of your life. It's the home for your conversations, memories, and online identity. We use it at home, in school, and especially at work. It's the center of our digital life.

Many of our everyday tools have evolved during the past decade, like docs, file sharing, and chat. But email has lagged behind. Our mission at Nylas is to change that.

Soon we'll be taking another big step forward. In a few weeks, we are launching a paid version of Nylas N1 and phasing out the current subsidized version. This is a pretty big

change, so we wanted to go over more details about the shift, why we're doing it, and what it means for you.

What's the latest since launching N1?

Can you believe it was only in October that we open sourced Nylas N1? Back then it was a total newcomer on the scene, built with a novel JavaScript architecture. On launch day, N1 was fast, beautiful, and powered by over two years of work on the Nylas Cloud APIs. It was the first extensible, open source email app created in over a decade.

After we flipped the "public" bit on GitHub, we sent the link to a few friends, posted it to Hacker News, and then sat back. What happened next was astonishing. Within literally minutes, thousands of developers had signed up and started using N1! Some were intrigued about how we forked Atom. Others were excited about the React-based plugin system. And overall folks seemed generally impressed with the polish and performance. It was clear we'd done something right!

Since then, we've shipped 26 major updates to N1, launching features like snoozing, send later, read receipts, link tracking, and templates. Last week's release included a beautiful new way to send calendar invites without leaving your mailbox. Our backend has scaled by over 20x, and well over 100k people have signed up to use Nylas N1 at over 25k distinct domains. (Hello, business users!)

N1 is open source and has also become extremely popular on GitHub. We've solved 1,200 GitHub issues, had 130 pull-requests, and launched 24 new themes and 20 new plugins with more than 50 outside contributors. The N1 GitHub repo now has 17k stars, ranking it #75 across everything on GitHub. It's more popular than Elasticsearch, Ansible, Go, and Kubernetes.

Our goal is to make email suck less, and we've been joined by thousands of developers across the world. Thank you! We couldn't have gotten here without the amazing support of our community and loyal users.

What is Nylas Cloud and why do we use it for N1?

Nylas N1 is built on server infrastructure that quickly and efficiently syncs mail data. We spent over two years building this system, and we call it the Nylas Cloud. It's fairly complex to run, requires a 24/7 on-call engineer to guarantee uptime, and powers hundreds of apps for enterprise customers. (You can see some of them [here](#).)

Building on the Nylas Cloud has made N1 lightweight and universal across all email providers. It also enables powerful features like snoozing, send later, open/link tracking, and our soon-to-be-launched mail merge system. These aren't possible in Gmail or Outlook without hacky browser extensions. Cloud sync is what sets N1 apart and makes it a supercharged productivity app. You can read more about that [here](#).

Many of our upcoming multi-mailbox collaboration features also strongly depend on having a server-based sync system. Going forward, the Nylas Cloud APIs will continue getting better and better, with more capabilities that support N1 and other products. (And of course, our sync engine will stay [open source](#).)

Isn't Nylas N1 free software?

Nylas N1 is open source free software. People in the open source community often explain free software as "[free as in free speech, not free as in free beer](#)." In other words, open source free software is about liberty. It gives developers freedom to extend, modify, and share a program. Nylas N1 is GPL-licensed and free as in freedom.

But right now, Nylas N1 is also free as in free beer, and that's a problem. Due to its popularity, the API traffic for N1 users has dramatically eclipsed the combined volume of all other apps built on the Nylas Cloud APIs. We already sync several hundred terabytes of data for our users and are adding tens of thousands of new users each month. It's costing us real dollars.

When we launched N1, we suspected this might happen someday, but we still released N1 as a free beta so developers could quickly try the app and give us feedback. We believe strongly in the mission of N1, so we foot the bill.

However, Nylas is a startup. We're a small venture-funded company with the goal of creating a long-term sustainable business that fuels innovation for email. We have a ton of big ideas and are still in the early days. On a long-term horizon, we see a large risk in continuing to subsidize the "free beer" version of N1. Companies like Mailbox did this and were forced to sell or shut down before finding a real business model (and before finishing the product they started). There are zero examples of sustainable email startups without a paid product. The beer unfortunately always runs out.

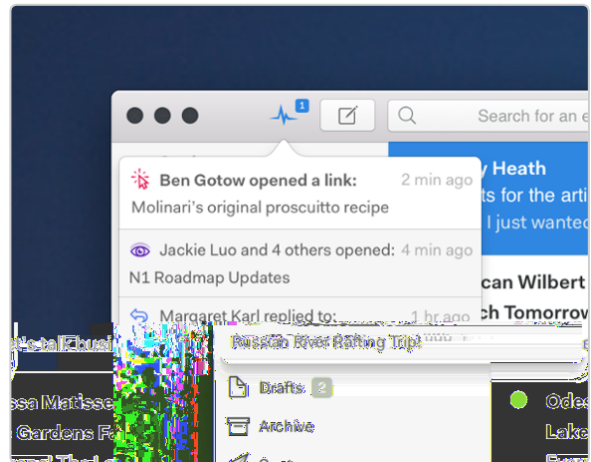
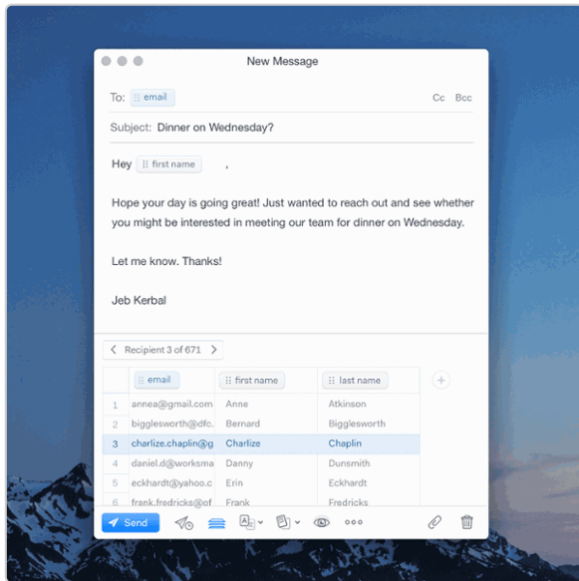
Why not just show ads?

It's not for us. Companies like Google and Yahoo provide free email services by mining your data and serving targeted ads based on the content. (If you're not paying, you're the product!) While this is potentially a lucrative option, it goes against our principles and is not the business we aim to build. We think there's a better, simpler way.

Introducing Nylas Pro

Today we're announcing a premium version of N1 that is both affordable for our users and will cover server costs. It follows an old idea: you pay us money every month, and we run the servers for you. We will also continue to improve N1, scale the Nylas Cloud, and develop exciting new features and products.

Nylas Pro is launching on May 1st and will include all the features you've come to love, like snoozing, open/link tracking, send later, and more. It will also include a brand-new mail merge and recipient activity features. Check out these screenshots for a preview:



Coming soon to Nylas N1!

All new signups will come with a 30-day free trial (\$0) that includes all features and can be canceled any time. You can find the full pricing details [here](#).

We think this is a fair price point for a tool you use every day. And for developers, this is about the same as running your own sync engine on DigitalOcean, AWS, or Google Cloud. (But without the headache of managing it.)

Do existing N1 users get any special deal?

Yes— all active users before May 1st will receive 1 year of Nylas Pro for free. Thanks for your help!

Is N1 staying open source?

Nylas is a company started by developers, and we remain committed to open source. **Nylas N1 will always stay open source.** Great N1 features like swipe-to-archive, quick reply templates, unified inbox, and other powerful plugins will be available for anyone to download, fork, and modify. And we are excited to continue supporting our developer community with talks, meetups, and potentially a future conference.

Looking forward

The future for Nylas is bright, with an exciting roadmap of big features coming later this year. I'd like to thank you again for your tremendous support and energy the past several months. It's humbling to be part of such a creative and passionate community, and we hope you'll continue to support us on our mission to make email suck less!

We can't wait to show you what's next. :) Long live email!

PS: PGP support is coming soon!

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