

DIGIMETRICS.AI — INTERNAL RESEARCH

Cold Outbound Stack

Lead-sourcing and sending platforms for the "Digital Marketing Superstar" campaign, weighed against the custom/Ateeq-built infrastructure your team already priced out.

Prepared 2026-08-26, updated same day with live pricing pulled directly off instantly.ai, smartlead.ai, woodpecker.co, lemlist.com, clay.com, apollo.io & gmass.co · plus the Superstar email creative, your 3rd-party cost sheet, and your connected Clay/Vibe Prospecting workspaces.

TL;DR RECOMMENDATION

Now that Ateeq's actual signed proposal is in hand, the choice is sharper than "DIY vs. custom infra" — it's **DIY self-serve (~\$300–400/mo all-in) vs. a full-service managed package from DigitalsGalaxy (~\$1,150–1,300/mo)**. The managed package includes list scraping, campaign strategy, copywriting, and ongoing management — real labor, not just software — so the premium buys hands-off execution, not better technology. For sending alone, live pricing shows **Smartlead, Instantly, and Woodpecker** land within a rounding error of each other (~\$0.006/email all-in); pair whichever you pick with **Vibe Prospecting** for list enrichment. **Apollo.io's Professional tier (\$79/seat/mo)** remains worth a look as a one-tool alternative that bundles both layers.

Two different jobs, two different tools

Every option below solves one of two problems. Conflating them is the most common way this kind of research goes sideways — Clay in particular gets shopped as an "email tool" when it isn't one.

LAYER 1

Find & enrich

Who do you email, and what do you actually know about them before you write to them?

LAYER 2

Send & track

How the Superstar email reaches an inbox instead of a spam folder — and what

Clay · Vibe Prospecting · Apollo.io



happens after someone opens it.

GMass · Woodpecker · Instantly ·
Smartlead · Lemlist · custom stack
(Ateeq)

Clay is not a sender. It orchestrates enrichment across 100+ data providers into clean rows, then hands off via webhook/CRM/CSV to something else that actually delivers mail. Budget for it as a data tool, and pair it with a Layer 2 tool — never expect it to replace one.

Layer 1 — Find & enrich

TOOL	PRICING MODEL	ENTRY COST
Vibe Prospecting	One-time credit packs, no subscription — credits valid 365 days	\$29.90 / 900 cr → \$649.99 / 30,000 cr
Clay	Monthly Data Credits + Actions, tiered subscription (live from clay.com/pricing)	Free (100 cr/500 actions) → \$185/mo (2,500 cr) → \$495/mo
Apollo.io	Per-seat annual subscription, bundles data + sequencing + sending (live	\$49/seat/mo (Basic) → \$79/seat/mo (Professional, 4,000 c

TOOL	PRICING MODEL	ENTRY COST
	from apollo.io/pricing)	

Your connected Clay workspace ("Personal Workspace") currently has zero saved workflows — it's a blank slate, so the \$185+/mo tiers only pay off once someone actually builds and reuses enrichment recipes there. Apollo's Basic tier caps daily sends at 250/day (fine for sourcing only, not real cold-email volume) — Professional (\$79/seat/mo) is the tier that actually removes that cap.

Layer 2 — Send & track

TOOL	PRICING (LIVE, AT 50K EMAILS/MO)
Smartlead	\$78/mo – "Pro" tier (90k sends/mo cap, 30k verified-email credits bundled
Woodpecker	\$99/mo – 4,000 "contacted prospects" tier (64k emails/mo bundled free)
Instantly	\$97/mo – "Hypergrowth" tier (125k emails/mo cap)
Lemlist	\$55-69/mo – "Email" plan (50k emails/mo, unlimited users)

TOOL	PRICING (LIVE, AT 50K EMAILS/MO)
GMass	~\$155/mo – 5-user Team Premium (RM725/mo, Malaysia pricing)
Custom stack (Ateeq)	~\$237 mo 1 → ~\$149/mo ongoing

Pulled live off each vendor's own pricing page. Smartlead/Instantly/Woodpecker/Lemlist prices are the platform-only subscription — none of them include the mailboxes and domains you still need to buy separately (see the cost-per-send breakdown below). GMass auto-priced in MYR for this browser session; converted at ~RM4.70/USD.

Cost per lead & cost per send — the real math

Headline subscription prices hide the number that actually matters: what does one contacted prospect cost you, all-in? Below, sourcing cost is a live figure pulled from your connected Vibe Prospecting account; sending cost is modeled from published mailbox/domain pricing at safe sending limits.

COST PER LEAD (SOURCING)

PROVIDER	WHAT YOU GET	COST PER LEAD	BASIS
Vibe Prospecting	Name, title, company + verified professional email	\$0.065–\$0.10	Live query run against your connected account: 1,000 US marketing-dept. contacts costs 1,000 credits to identify + 2,000 credits to reveal email (3 cr/lead total). At \$0.0217–\$0.0332 per credit

PROVIDER	WHAT YOU GET	COST PER LEAD	BASIS
			depending on pack size, that's \$0.065 (Elite pack) to \$0.10 (Plus pack) per lead.
Apollo.io	Verified email, included in the \$79/seat/mo Professional subscription (add ~8x credits for mobile phone)	~\$0.02	Professional grants 4,000 credits/mo for \$79/mo = ~\$0.0198/credit; email = 1 credit. Corrects the commonly-cited \$0.20/credit figure, which is a legacy standalone top-up rate, not the live subscription-included rate.
Clay	Full waterfall enrichment — email + firmographics across multiple providers	\$0.14–\$0.67	~8–14 credits/lead for a realistic prospect+company workflow. Clay's own pricing page states Data Credits "start at \$0.05 each" and get cheaper with volume, but doesn't publish a flat \$/lead — this range is a third-party practitioner estimate, not from clay.com directly.

Vibe Prospecting's US "marketing department" segment alone has **60,000 matching contacts** — far more than you need to validate the Superstar campaign before spending on a bigger pack. Apollo.io's **\$0.02/lead** now undercuts it on sourcing cost alone — but Apollo is priced per seat, not per credit pack, so it only wins if you're already paying for a seat to use its sending features too.

COST PER SEND (SENDING PLATFORM, FULLY LOADED)

Platform subscriptions don't include mailboxes or domains — and safe sending limits (30–40 emails/mailbox/day, 2–3 mailboxes/domain) mean the real cost per email is subscription + mailboxes + domains, divided by what you can actually send without burning your reputation. Modeled here at 50,000 emails/month (~1,667/day → ~42 mailboxes, ~15 domains), using the live per-platform tier that actually covers that volume:

PLATFORM	SUBSCRIPTION (LIVE)	MAILBOXES + DOMAINS
Custom stack (Ateeq)	— (bundled)	— (bundled)
Lemlist	\$69/mo (Email plan)	~\$208/mo (42 × ~\$4.50 + 15 domains)
Smartlead	\$78/mo (Pro)	~\$208/mo

Platform	Subscription (Live)	Mailboxes + Domains
Woodpecker	\$99/mo (4,000-prospect tier)	~\$208/mo
Instantly	\$97/mo (Hypergrowth)	~\$208-\$336/mo (3rd-party vs. Instantly-hosted)
GMass	~\$155/mo (5-seat team)	Extra Workspace mailboxes needed — Gmail/Workspace caps make 50k/mo impractical regardless of GMass plan

On sticker price alone, **Lemlist looks cheapest** — but its ~62% inbox-placement rate means more of what you pay for never lands. Adjusting for each platform's tested deliverability rate (cost ÷ placement rate = cost per *inbox-landed* email) re-orders the field: **Smartlead ≈\$0.0067, Woodpecker ≈\$0.0063** (if its self-reported 98% holds), **Instantly ≈\$0.0078, Lemlist ≈\$0.0089** — the "cheap" option becomes the most expensive per email that actually reaches an inbox. The custom stack's per-email cost is also **fixed regardless of volume within its capacity band** — running it near 100k/mo instead of 50k/mo roughly halves the effective cost per email, an asymmetry none of the SaaS tools share.

ALL-IN COST PER FULLY-SEQUENCED LEAD

Assuming a typical 3-touch sequence (initial + 2 follow-ups) per lead, sourcing and sending combine to roughly:

Combination	Sourcing	Sending (3 Touches)
Vibe Prospecting + Lemlist/Smartlead/Woodpecker	\$0.065-\$0.10	~\$0.017
Vibe Prospecting + Instantly	\$0.065-\$0.10	~\$0.018-\$0.027
Apollo.io Professional (one tool, both layers)	\$79/seat/mo covers ~4,000 leads sourced	unlimited sending
Clay + Smartlead	\$0.14-\$0.67	~\$0.017

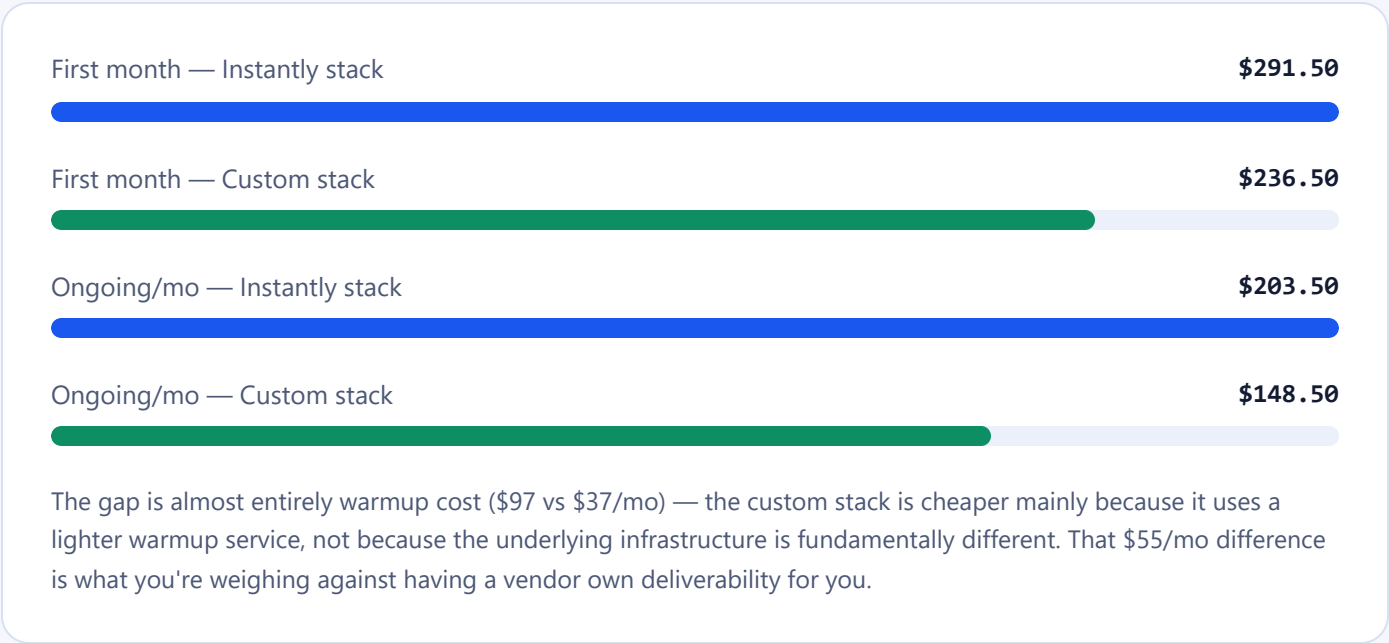
The sending-platform choice barely moves the blended total — Lemlist, Smartlead, and Woodpecker all land within a fraction of a cent of each other per lead, because mailbox/domain overhead dominates the math, not the subscription fee. **Pick the sender on deliverability and features, not price** — then spend the real negotiating energy on the sourcing side, where Vibe Prospecting vs. Clay is a genuine 2–7x cost difference. Apollo's all-in-one number looks pricier per lead here only because

its seat cost is fixed regardless of volume — it gets more competitive above ~8,000–10,000 leads/month on one seat.

Caveats: sending-cost figures assume conservative 30–40 sends/mailbox/day — pushing higher lowers cost but raises spam-flag risk. Confirm each platform's exact tier against your real concurrent lead count on their own calculators before buying. Vibe Prospecting's email fields were credit-costed but not revealed in this exploration (masked preview) — actual deliverability of those emails is unverified until exported and tested. All figures were pulled live from vendor pricing pages on 2026-08-26 and change frequently — re-check before purchasing.

What your own cost sheet already says

Your "3rd Party Tools Cost" spreadsheet already modeled this exact tradeoff for 50k–100k emails/month capacity — an Instantly-based stack against a fully custom one (Outlook + SMTP + Spaceship domains + warmup + OVH).



What Ateeq's actual proposal says

The signed proposal from DigitalGalaxy (dated 23 Jul 2026) is a full-service package, not just infrastructure hosting — it bundles list scraping, campaign strategy, copywriting, and ongoing management on top of the infra your cost sheet already priced.

LINE	ITEM	COST	WHAT IT A COVERS
	Cold email infrastructure (100k emails/mo capacity)	\$300 one-time (Instantly.ai) or \$450 one-time (their own app)	Setup fee SMTP/domain SPF-DMARC/A schedule configura recurring the separ \$203.50/m (Instantly \$148.50/m app) from above.
	Email Marketing Services	\$1,000/month	10,000 ne scraped / campaign copywriti testing, d managen automatic complian reporting managed not a dat
	System scalability (+100k/mo sending quota)	\$120 one-time	Upgrades sending c ~200k/m
	Technical support	\$150/month (optional)	Ongoing support b base serv

All-in, the full managed package runs **~\$450–\$570 one-time + ~\$1,150–\$1,300/month** (services + infra + optional support) — roughly **3–4x the ~\$300–400/month** of a DIY Vibe Prospecting + Smartlead/Woodpecker/Lemlist stack. At \$1,000/mo for 10,000 leads, the scraping alone works out to **\$0.10/lead** — in line with Vibe Prospecting's rate — but that fee also buys the strategy, copywriting, and campaign management labor a DIY stack requires your own team to do. The proposal also settles the earlier open question about the setup-fee gap: paying \$150 more upfront for the custom app over

Instantly.ai pays itself back in about **2.7 months** at the \$55/mo infra saving, before the \$1,000/mo services fee (which applies either way) is even considered.

Worth asking Ateeq directly: what source and consent basis the "10,000 new leads scraping/month" uses — scraped contact data carries more CAN-SPAM/GDPR/PDPA exposure than an opt-in list or a waterfall-verified provider like Vibe Prospecting or Clay, and that risk sits with Digimetrics regardless of who built the list.

Recommended phasing

01

Validate — weeks 1–2

Send the Superstar campaign through Smartlead or Instantly to a Vibe-Prospecting-sourced list of a few hundred to low-thousands of contacts. Track opens, replies, bounces, and spam complaints — not just sends.

02

Size the real volume — weeks 3–4

If deliverability and reply rate hold up, decide the actual sustained monthly volume you need. This number is what the custom-stack math above depends on — it isn't meaningful until you have it.

03

Reconsider build vs. buy — month 2+

Decide between two real options, not one: keep running DIY self-serve (~\$300–400/mo, your team owns strategy and copy) or bring in DigitalGalaxy's full managed package (~\$1,150–1,300/mo, Ateeq's team owns it). The managed option only pays for itself if your team's time doing strategy/copy/monitoring is worth more than the ~\$750–900/mo premium.

04

Compliance pass — before the first send

Confirm the list-building method has a lawful basis (CAN-SPAM / GDPR / Singapore PDPA, given the Apsolute.ai footer address), the unsubscribe link actually works, and the sender identity is honest. This applies regardless of which tool you pick.

Open questions / risks

- * **Ateeq's proposal doesn't say what "10,000 new leads scraping/month" actually sources from** — get the data source and consent basis in writing before treating that list as safe to email.
- * **Deliverability percentages are third-party benchmarks**, not results on your own domains — treat them as directional, re-test once you're actually sending.

- * **Cold, unsolicited marketing email carries real compliance exposure** — confirm the legal basis for however the list gets built before the first send goes out, whether that list comes from Ateeq's scraping or a self-serve tool.
- * **The proposal's \$1,000/mo services fee has no stated contract length or cancellation terms** in the text provided — confirm commitment period before signing.

Sources — live pricing pages (fetched 2026-08-26)

instantly.ai/pricing

smartlead.ai/pricing

woodpecker.co/pricing

lemlist.com/pricing

clay.com/pricing

apollo.io/pricing

gmass.co/pricing

Deliverability benchmarks (third-party, directional only):

[instantly.ai — Instantly vs Smartlead vs Lemlist \(2026\)](#)

[puzzleinbox.com — 90-day side-by-side test](#)

Plus: your "3rd Party Tools Cost" Google Sheet/PDF, DigitalGalaxy's signed "Proposal for Email Marketing Solutions" (23 Jul 2026), and live pricing/exploration pulled directly from the connected Clay and Vibe Prospecting workspaces.