{☰} **wordnerds**

True Voice of Customer

Big Six Energy CX During COVID-19 Summary Report

A Twitter Study Using Deep Learning, NLP & Linguistics

British Gas edf ENERGY e·on npower SCOTTISHPOWER sse

Why read this report?

Despite providing a necessary service, the utilities industry suffers a severe lack of customer trust and loyalty.

Service providers are unappreciated, and churn is frequent.

With significant competition from smaller, 'smart' providers, easy and increasingly automated switching services - the big six face an up-hill battle to cling onto market share.

The looming threat of C-MeX and OFGEM's penalties/incentives make CX the new battleground for energy companies.

From outages to issues with online payments - every customer interaction can either be a threat to revenue or an opportunity to build the brand.

Using our game-changing text analysis software, we've analysed over 13K tweets mentioning the top six UK energy companies, to uncover:

- **Which supplier outshone the rest during COVID-19**
- **Who has the happiest customers?**
- **What issues are affecting one supplier disproportionately?**

Report Contents

What we did

Between **28th April to 28th May 2020**, we listened to all of the the tweets sent to the Twitter handles of the big six UK Energy Companies.

Over 13K tweets were fed through our game-changing <u>text analysis and insight platform</u> where our combination of cutting edge artificial intelligence (AI) and old-school linguistics allows computers to read - and genuinely understand - what people actually mean, not just count the words they use, like traditional social listening tools.

What we found

EDF
Had the happiest customers

Scottish Power
Had the most interactions

E-ON
Had the most unhappy customers

 All providers **struggled with the integration of smart meters**, and **customers seem mistrustful**, bucking the efforts of providers to roll out installations.
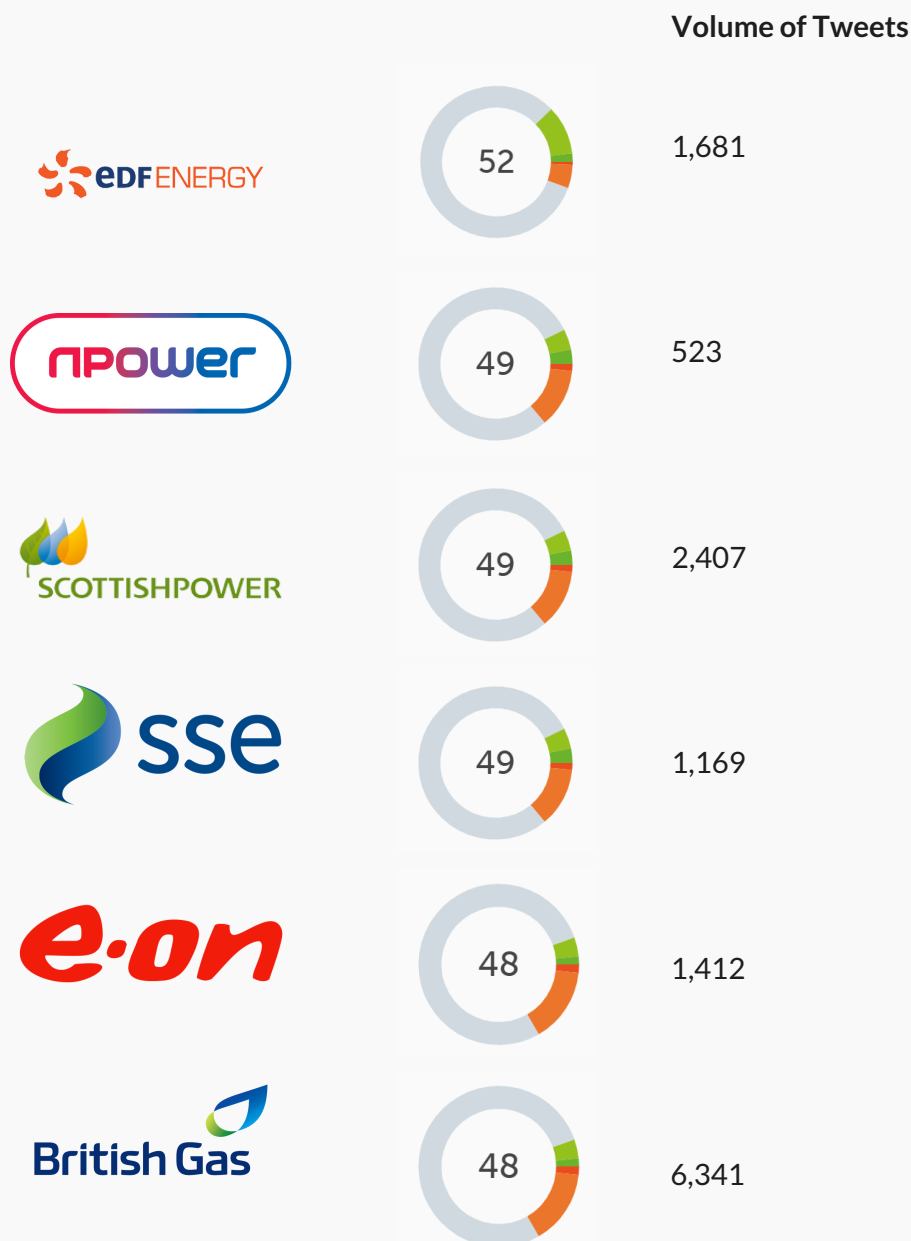
 In light of lockdown and increasingly tough economic conditions, **billing and refunds were hugely prevalent** - customers were particularly impatient at waiting for a response** to these related issues.

 Vulnerable customers were identifiable within the data, and often **brands suffered** where they **failed to show empathy** in the current climate.

League table

League table of brands based on a weighted average Wordnerds generated sentiment score out of 100 - **28th April to 28th May 2020**

Volume of Tweets

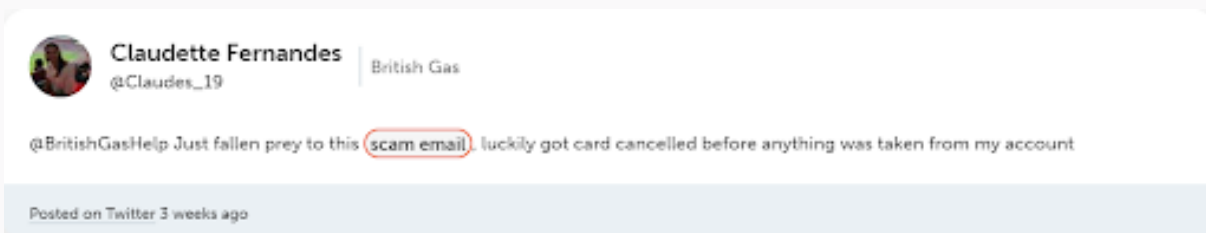| Brand	Score	Volume of Tweets
eDF ENERGY	52	1,681
npower	49	523
SCOTTISHPOWER	49	2,407
sse	49	1,169
e·on	48	1,412
British Gas	48	6,341

Read on to see a deeper dive into each brand, as we uncover what customers are really saying about their providers.

British Gas received the most noise , as much as the other providers combined - and sentiment steadily declined during the same period.
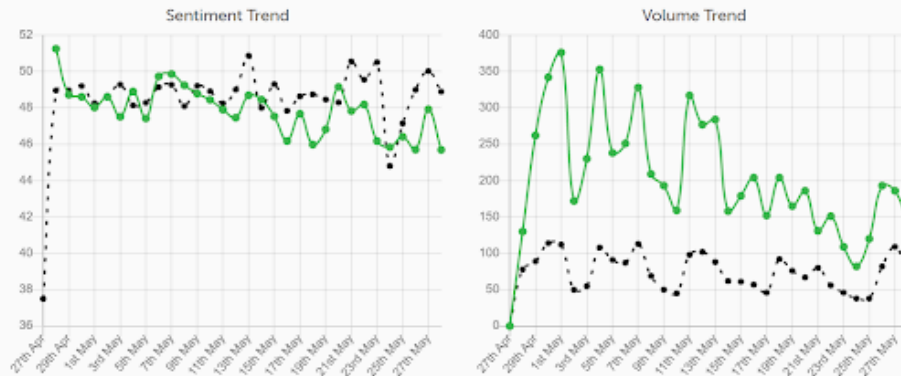
Scam emails are particularly prevalent with this brand - we found 87 reports from people receiving scam emails from "British Gas" during the reporting period.

A particularly savvy email scam going round in early April caught a number of people out

Claudette Fernandes
@Claudes_19 | British Gas

@BritishGasHelp Just fallen prey to this scam email, luckily got card cancelled before anything was taken from my account

Posted on Twitter 3 weeks ago

Boiler repairs and servicing requirements were high up on the agenda of British Gas customers; featuring as the 5th highest issue being raised.

Enigneers

Received significant and worth praise for their efforts during COVID-19

Emergency

2% tweets from non-customers looking for emergency repairs after being let down by their providers

Refunds

Most negative sentiment from Homecare Agreement customers as cancellations prompted a rise in calls for refunds on annual fees

One to watch: We found two instances of customers reporting a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning from their boiler, with one threat of legal action, as a result of their boiler service being cancelled.

Availability of customer service agents proved particularly problematic for E.ON's customers during this period.

live chat   customer service   phone line
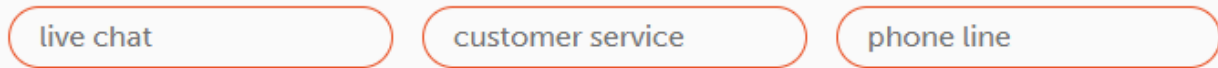
We found over 7% of the total conversations to E.ON entailed meter issues, with 97% of this feedback overwhelmingly negative. E.ON's customers were twice as likely to raise meter issues than British Gas or Scottish Power.
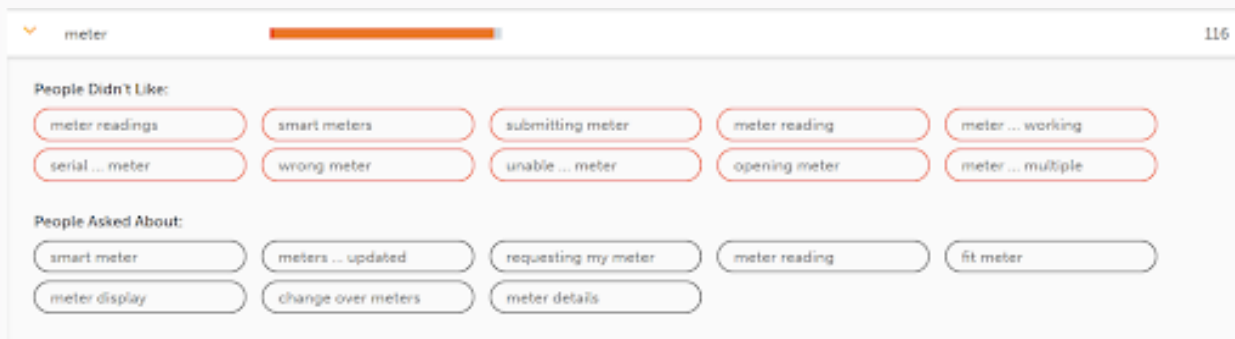
Onboarding

Whilst new customers at E.ON were deemed happier than new British Gas' customers, we still found a number of potential issues during the onboarding process:

~60% of complaints from new customers were due to a number of failed attempts to setup or register a new account. With phone lines down, sentiment dipped, as customers became frustrated at a lack of efficient responses
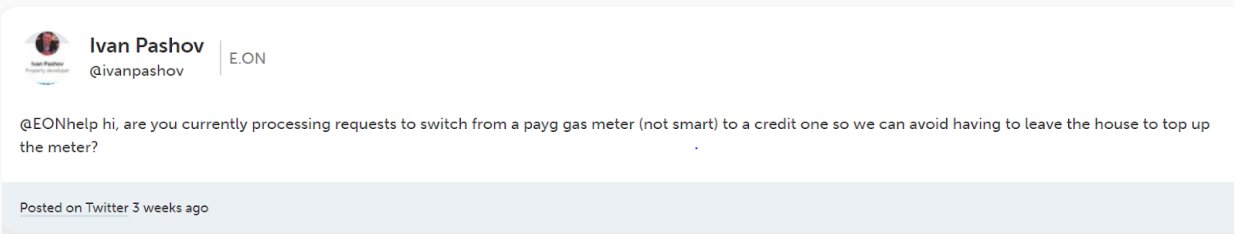
We also found 27% of customers had incompatible smart meters for readings

During the reporting period , customers - both new and existing - who were moving home and using the online form stated a lack of effective communication, and delays in receiving a response.

Cont...

e·on

In light of lockdown, there has been a steady number of Pay As You Go customers wishing to switch to credit meters, to reduce their human contact.

Ivan Pashov
@ivanpashov

E.ON

@EONhelp hi, are you currently processing requests to switch from a payg gas meter (not smart) to a credit one so we can avoid having to leave the house to top up the meter?

Posted on Twitter 3 weeks ago

Where E.ON out performed

Due to the Coronavirus and as lockdown continued, heightened financial anxieties weigh on sentiment around bills. A tricky issue affecting each supplier, but our analysis demonstrated E.ON performed better than the market in this area. Factors that contributed to this result are:

★ Identifying vulnerable customers

★ Enabling the emergency credit extension

★ Proportionally fewer customers reporting increases in billing

In May, metering issues were especially prevalent for SSE customers, with only E.ON topping the % of mentions from customers.
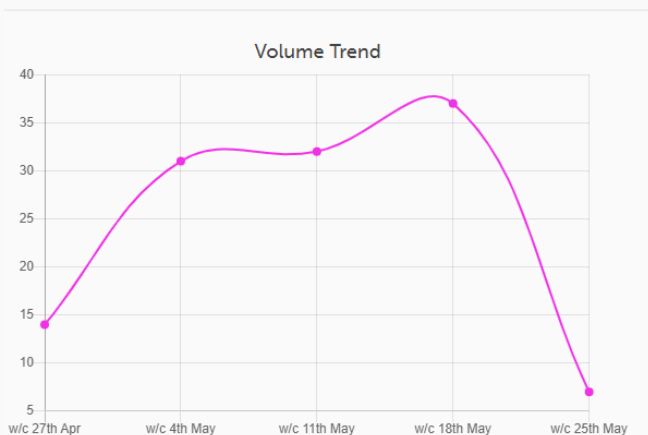
Smart meters

28% of conversations about meters involved a smart meter

Problems with billing

14% of those with smart meters, still raised problems with billing, and a further 28% mentioned reading errors

Peak broadband issue

Volume Trend

On 18th May, we found a peak in customers flagging connectivity issues with SSE's broadband service.

Amongst SSE's customer groups, we found those discussing their internet service were most deeply negative (100% comments were negative).

Internet issues contributed to 10.8% of the total conversation to SSE during this period; this exacerbated many customer service related complaints, as customers struggled to speak with customer service agents in the contact centre.

People Didn't Like:

| lost ... connection | multiple times | taken ... account | past few months | time ... week |
| customer service | wifi at the minute | phone line | working from home | internet connection |

People Asked About:

| issues ... broadband | broadband ... hours | problem ... broadband | broadband ... going |

On the w/c 11th May we found a spike of customers looking to escalate complaints to Ofgem/ombudsman, totalling more instances than the other provider during this period.

Billing issues topped the pile of issues raised during this period, and we saw the biggest fall in sentiment over the course of a single day (11th May) by six points, from 51 to 45.

Volume Trend

Legend: British Gas, EDF Energy, E.ON, npower, Scottish Power, SSE
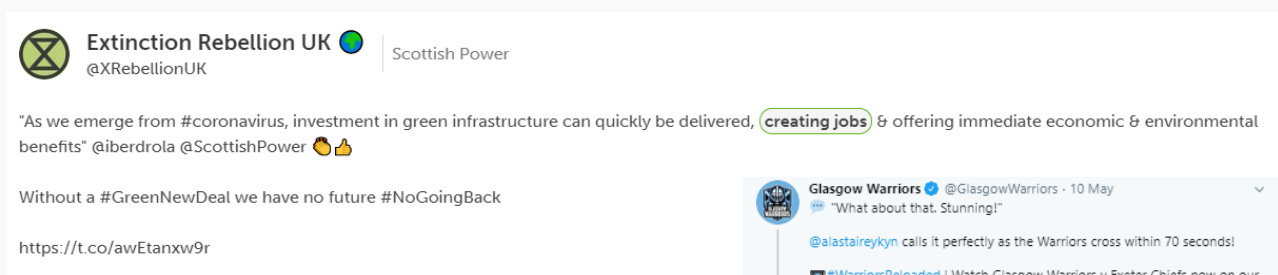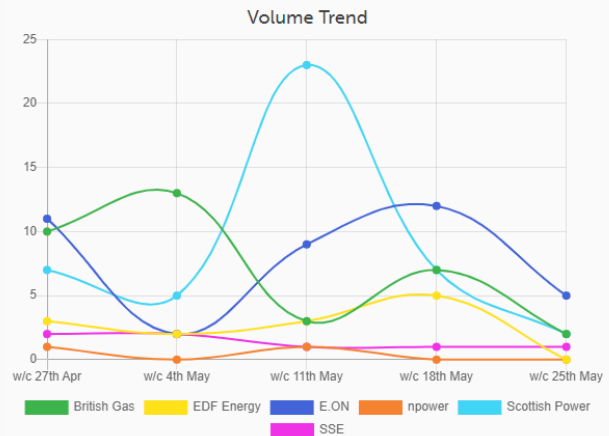
During the particularly challenging period caused by the Coronavirus, we saw consistent patterns of customers looking to activate their emergency credit offering, as well as those looking to request a refund on their accounts with credit.

People Asked About:

(emergency credit) (credit ... account) (getting a credit)

Scottish Power earned some positive PR this month, and it certainly moved the dial, when comparing positivity against competitors. Firstly, net sentiment improved following the Guardian's Green Energy article, and was vamped by support from campaigner group Extinction Rebellion, in relation to Socttish Powers' investment in green energy, the promise of further job opportunities and a cleaner economic recovery.

Extinction Rebellion UK 🌍 | Scottish Power
@XRebellionUK

"As we emerge from #coronavirus, investment in green infrastructure can quickly be delivered, (creating jobs) & offering immediate economic & environmental benefits" @iberdrola @ScottishPower 👏👍

Without a #GreenNewDeal we have no future #NoGoingBack

https://t.co/awEtanxw9r

Glasgow Warriors ✔ @GlasgowWarriors · 10 May
💬 "What about that. Stunning!"

@alastaireykyn calls it perfectly as the Warriors cross within 70 seconds!

📺#WarriorsReloaded | Watch Glasgow Warriors v Exeter Chiefs now on our Facebook and YouTube channels, powered by @SPEnergyNetwork

Sponsorship of the Glasgow Warriors is also a seemingly positive brand influence, with 57 mentions, pushing up sentiment around these discussions by six points to 55.
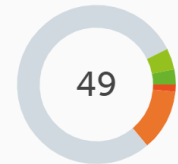
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npower did seemingly well in our Twitter analysis during this period, although it's worth noting their volume of tweets was significantly smaller than their competitors.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore positive sentiment around their customer service support, which scored highest amongst the providers. Maybe we're biased, but we think that lot from Sunderland are a pretty canny bunch too!

> **Aaron Evans** | npower
> @azevs
>
> @npowerhq just spoke with a gentleman based in Sunderland. Best (customer service I've received in a long time) Please relay this back 👍👏
>
> Related to: 🔴 Customer Service
>
> Posted on Twitter 2 weeks ago

'Back Billing' was a big source of stress and agitation, prompting more discussions of churn.

People Didn't Like:

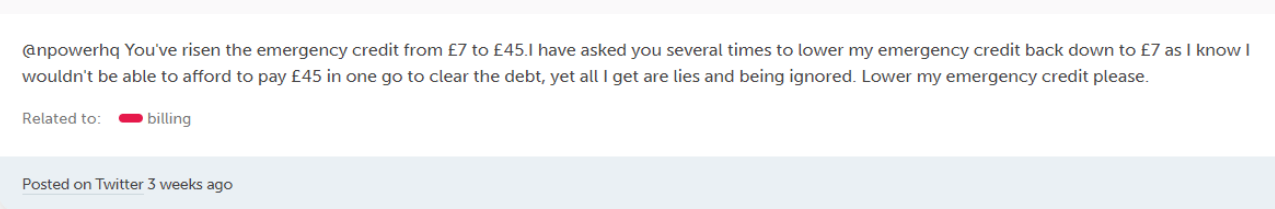|				
error ... behalf	hold for 15 minutes	online chat	phone lines	complaints team
unprecedented times	sent me a letter	paid ... bill	customer service	received ... bill

Direct Debits

Customers talking about Direct Debit payments were most prevalent with this provider. Over 50% of customers referenced a significant increase in their Direct Debit payment.

Payment Plans

A small cluster of customers who had set up a payment plan reported these plans were not being upheld or actioned.

We found 3.5% of customer tweets acknowledged that their accounts were in debt. Of those accounts with a debt to be settled, we identified 61% of those customers were classed as vulnerable, and 42% were financially suffering as a result of the Coronavirus.

> @npowerhq You've risen the emergency credit from £7 to £45.I have asked you several times to lower my emergency credit back down to £7 as I know I wouldn't be able to afford to pay £45 in one go to clear the debt, yet all I get are lies and being ignored. Lower my emergency credit please.
>
> Related to: 🔴 billing
>
> Posted on Twitter 3 weeks ago

EDF ENERGY

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Whilst still a divisive issue, EDF's nuclear energy resources were largely well received and supported by business and individuals who care about a low carbon energy system.

Conversations around EDF's nuclear investment were triggered by EDF's recent planning application for Sizewell C. The PR around this more than doubled the volume of conversations EDF were involved with, peaking on 27th May.

Volume Trend
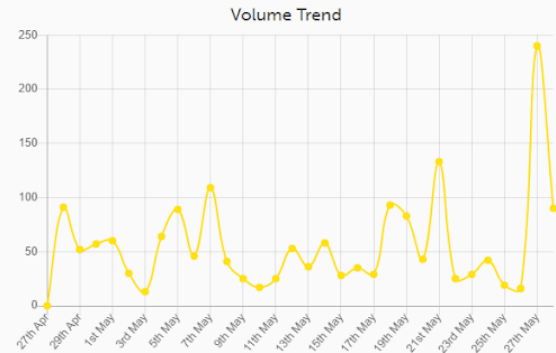
WhatsApp

WhatsApp comms were particularly highly praised as customers cited the easy and efficient way to communicate with EDF.

Service agents

Customers rallied behind service agents working from home, and appreciated the support and levels of service EDF agents were able to provide during lockdown.

Smart meters

EDF faced similar challenges to the other providers with the installation of smart meters, as **smart meters were the most common issue** flagged by customers, with 94% of those customers having a negative experience.

10% of customers reported reading errors with their smart meter

6% complained about the wait for installation of a new smart meter

Customers moving away from EDF faced a few issues **settling their accounts**
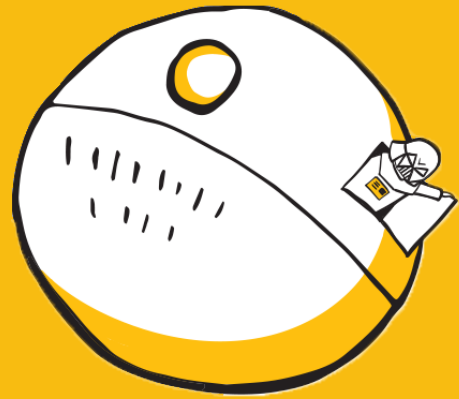
Over half of customers were disputing final billing amounts

We found 18% of customers noted delays, or a lack of response from EDF in settling the final bill

Get the full picture & be a force to be reckoned with

Introductory special offer...

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Helen@wordnerds.ai

If you're not acting on what your customers say about you, speak to Wordnerds.

Language is pretty weird. Young people use it very differently to older people, regions have their very own slang and sarcasm and irony are just great; we often mean the exact opposite of what we write. Don't even start us on spelling, punctuation, grammar and txt spk (roflcopter!).

So how can the world's biggest brands make sense of the millions of tweets, emails, support requests, webchats and online reviews written by their customers? How do they know what staff are saying in CRM, intranet and surveys? How can they benchmark their performance against competitors?

Existing social listening software is great at visualising quantitative data, but their word clouds and sentiment scores tell us nothing. They give no actual actionable insight.

Wordnerds is a software platform that helps brands uncover and understand the true voice of their customers. By combining cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) with old-school linguistics, our disruptive tech is a new way to train computers to read—and genuinely understand—language, and not just count the words.

hello@wordnerds.ai