From Grammar Checker to Superhuman

Idea In Short

Grammarly built its business on a simple freemium trade: check basic grammar and spelling for free, then charge for the deeper suggestions serious writers want. Three Ukrainian founders, Alex Shevchenko, Max Lytvyn and Dmytro Lider, launched the product in 2009 after an earlier plagiarism-detection startup taught them how to build language-analysis software at scale. A 2012 browser extension turned that idea into a mass-market habit, embedding real-time writing suggestions into Gmail, Facebook and eventually Microsoft Word. By November 2021, Grammarly was worth $13 billion without ever taking the company public. Since then, new leadership has pushed Grammarly well beyond grammar checking, buying the productivity platform Coda and the AI email client Superhuman, then renaming the parent company after the latter. This article covers how that shift happened and how Grammarly still makes its money.

A Plagiarism Detector Becomes a Grammar Checker

Before Grammarly existed, Shevchenko and Lytvyn ran MyDropBox, a plagiarism-detection tool for universities, with Lider working alongside them as a programmer. That earlier venture taught the trio how to build software that could analyze large volumes of text quickly and reliably, a skill that translated directly into their next idea. In 2009, the three launched Grammarly as a subscription grammar checker aimed at academics who needed their writing checked against a large language database. The product worked, but the subscription-only model limited how many people would ever try it.1

The Browser Extension That Changed Everything

Grammarly's real growth began in 2012, when the company released a browser extension that checked writing in real time on websites like Facebook, Twitter and Gmail rather than requiring users to paste text into a separate tool. That shift from a standalone product to an embedded one removed the biggest barrier to adoption: users no longer had to change their workflow to get value from the software. The extension also let Grammarly offer a free tier for the first time, catching basic errors at no cost while reserving style suggestions, vocabulary alternatives and plagiarism detection for paying subscribers. Deeper Microsoft integrations followed later in the decade, including a 2017 launch inside Word and Outlook that extended the same freemium logic into desktop software Grammarly did not control.

> A free plugin that fixes a comma is what got people to trust Grammarly with the rest of their writing

Nearly Broke Before It Was a Decacorn

Grammarly's path was not a straight climb. The founders faced repeated rejections from venture capital firms in the company's early years and largely bootstrapped operations until the 2012 extension proved there was real demand. Growth accelerated only after that inflection point, as the free tier pulled in a much larger user base than the original subscription-only product ever reached. The company's later fundraising success, culminating in a valuation in the tens of billions of dollars, stands in contrast to how close it came to folding in its first few years.2

Becoming a Decacorn Without Going Public

By November 2021, Grammarly had reached a $13 billion valuation after raising just over $200 million from new investors Baillie Gifford and BlackRock, alongside existing backers. At the time, the company reported roughly 30 million daily active users and a paid subscriber base that had grown enough to justify the round without an initial public offering. The funding made Shevchenko and Lytvyn billionaires on paper, a milestone reached without the company ever listing shares on a public exchange. Grammarly has stayed private since, funding its later acquisitions through revenue-linked financing rather than a stock market debut.3

New Leadership for a New Strategy

Shevchenko led Grammarly as chief executive for roughly 12 years before handing the role to Rahul Roy-Chowdhury, a former Google product executive, in May 2023. That leadership change coincided with generative AI reshaping how people expected writing tools to work, pushing Grammarly to move beyond grammar correction into broader AI-assisted writing and editing. Roy-Chowdhury's tenure gave way to another change in 2025, when Shishir Mehrotra became chief executive after Grammarly acquired Coda, the workplace productivity platform he had founded and led. Each transition moved Grammarly's leadership further from its founding team and closer to executives with backgrounds in large-scale AI products.

Buying Its Way Into an AI Platform

Grammarly acquired Coda in December 2024, adding a document and workspace platform to a product line that had, until then, focused almost entirely on writing assistance rather than broader productivity tools. Seven months later, in June 2025, Grammarly acquired Superhuman, an AI-powered email client known for its speed and keyboard-driven interface. Neither company disclosed the financial terms of the Superhuman deal. Together, the acquisitions gave Grammarly products that could sit inside a user's email and workspace rather than only inside a text box, a deliberate expansion beyond the browser extension that built the company.4, 5

Betting the Brand on a Rename

In October 2025, Grammarly renamed its parent company from Grammarly Inc. to Superhuman Platform Inc., a move that put the newly acquired brand ahead of the one that had defined the company for 16 years. The Grammarly product itself kept its name and continued serving the writers, students and businesses who use it daily, but the corporate identity now points toward the AI productivity platform Mehrotra is building. Reaction to the rebrand was mixed, with some observers questioning whether trading a recognizable consumer brand for a newer acquisition carried more risk than reward. The company backed the move with continued investment, including $1 billion in revenue-linked financing from General Catalyst earlier in 2025 that funded the acquisitions and go-to-market expansion behind the new strategy.6

Key Partners

Grammarly's most consequential partnerships are the platform integrations that embed its suggestions directly into software it does not own, including Microsoft Word, Outlook and

Google Docs. Affiliate partners promote Grammarly across blogs, educational sites and content platforms in exchange for referral commissions, a channel that has driven a meaningful share of new sign-ups over the years. Investors including Baillie Gifford, BlackRock and General Catalyst function as financial partners whose capital funded Grammarly's move from a single writing tool into an acquisitive AI platform. Coda and Superhuman, now part of the same corporate structure, effectively became internal partners whose technology feeds directly into Grammarly's broader product roadmap.

Key Activities

Grammarly's core activity remains developing and refining the language models and rule-based systems that power its grammar, style and clarity suggestions across every supported platform. Since the Coda and Superhuman acquisitions, the company has added workspace and email product development to that list, integrating three previously separate codebases into a coherent platform. Customer support and account management, particularly for Grammarly Business and Grammarly for Education customers, consume significant operational resources given the range of institutions the company serves. Marketing and partnership management, including maintaining the platform integrations that make Grammarly available inside Word, Gmail and other third-party software, round out the company's daily activities.

Key Resources

Grammarly's most valuable resource is the language-analysis technology built up over more than a decade, now combined with the AI models and infrastructure it gained through the Coda and Superhuman acquisitions. Its user base, tens of millions of people who open the product daily, functions as both a resource and a moat, since a writing tool with more usage data can offer more accurate suggestions. The engineering, linguistics and machine-learning teams responsible for maintaining and improving that technology represent a significant talent investment. Grammarly's brand recognition, built through years as a default writing tool for students and professionals, continues to support adoption even as the company expands into new product categories.

Value Propositions

For individual users, Grammarly's core value is catching errors and offering style improvements in real time, across whichever app or website they happen to be writing in, without breaking their workflow. For businesses, Grammarly Business adds team-wide consistency in tone and style along with administrative tools that a single consumer subscription cannot provide. For educational institutions, the tool doubles as a teaching aid that gives students immediate feedback on their writing rather than waiting for an instructor's comments. Since the Coda and Superhuman acquisitions, Grammarly has extended this proposition into workspace organization and faster email handling, positioning itself as a broader productivity layer rather than a single-purpose writing checker.

Customer Relationships

Grammarly maintains most individual user relationships through self-service tools, in-product prompts and email lifecycle marketing designed to convert free users into paying subscribers over time. Business and education customers receive more direct account management, given the higher contract values and administrative complexity those relationships involve. Customer support operates continuously to handle technical issues and billing questions across all three customer segments. Social media engagement and community content, including writing tips and product updates, help Grammarly stay visible to users between active sessions with the product.

Channels

Grammarly reaches most users directly through its website, browser extension stores and the native integrations it maintains inside Word, Outlook and Google Docs. Search engine optimization and content marketing, built around writing and grammar topics, continue to drive organic traffic to the free product. Affiliate marketing extends Grammarly's reach through partner websites that earn a commission for referring new users. Since the 2025 acquisitions, Grammarly has also gained Superhuman's existing distribution among professionals who adopted the email client independently of Grammarly's writing tools.

Customer Segments

Grammarly serves three primary customer groups: individual writers using the free or premium consumer product, businesses that purchase Grammarly Business for their teams and educational institutions that license the tool for students and faculty through Grammarly for Education. Individual users make up the largest share of Grammarly's active base and are the group most likely to start on the free tier before some convert to paid plans. Businesses pay for centralized billing, administrative controls and priority support that individual subscriptions do not include. Educational institutions negotiate pricing based on the number of students and faculty covered, giving Grammarly a foothold with users early in their academic careers who may continue as paying customers later.

Cost Structure

Grammarly's largest costs are research and development, covering the language models, AI infrastructure and engineering talent needed to maintain and improve its products across three now-integrated platforms. Customer support costs scale with Grammarly's tens of millions of active users, even though only a fraction convert to paid plans. Marketing spending supports both the original writing-tool funnel and the newer push to promote Coda and Superhuman under the Superhuman Platform umbrella. Acquisition-related costs, including the undisclosed sums paid for Coda and Superhuman and the integration work that followed, added a new and substantial line to the cost structure in 2024 and 2025.

Revenue Streams

Grammarly's primary revenue stream remains premium subscriptions sold to individual users, businesses through Grammarly Business and educational institutions through Grammarly for Education, all built on the same freemium foundation that free users are gradually encouraged to upgrade from. Licensing revenue comes from universities and institutions that pay for broad access on behalf of their students and staff. Since the 2025 acquisitions, Coda and Superhuman contribute additional subscription revenue as standalone paid products, expanding Grammarly's income beyond writing assistance into workspace software and AI-powered email.

- 1Grammarly's founding and its plagiarism-detection predecessor
- 2Grammarly's early struggles before its AI-era growth
- 3Grammarly's founders becoming billionaires after the $13 billion valuation
- 4Grammarly's acquisition of Coda to expand into AI productivity
- 5Grammarly's acquisition of the AI email client Superhuman
- 6Grammarly's rebrand to Superhuman Platform Inc.

Summary

Grammarly's expansion into Coda and Superhuman marks a deliberate break from its original identity as a browser plugin that fixed typos. Shishir Mehrotra, who joined as chief executive after Grammarly acquired his company Coda, is betting that the writing-assistant brand can stretch into a broader AI productivity suite without losing the tens of millions of users who still open it just to fix a comma splice. Renaming the parent company Superhuman Platform Inc. in October 2025 signals how far that bet extends, even as the Grammarly product name stays in daily use. The freemium funnel that built the company, free basic checks pulling users toward paid plans, still anchors the business, but subscription revenue now competes for attention with a more ambitious platform strategy. Whether Grammarly's writing-focused user base actually wants an all-purpose AI workspace remains the open question behind the rebrand.