Email Marketing
Best Practices for Inbox Placement

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One of the critical aspects of an effective email marketing strategy is **maximizing email deliverability and inbox placement.**

Introduction

Recipient inbox providers and email filtering services track your email sending history and use algorithms to measure your sender reputation – in other words, they gauge how likely you are to send high quality email based your past behavior, and use this estimate to help determine whether your next email will be rejected, sent to junk/spam, or delivered to the inbox.

A **good reputation** results in higher inbox placement and more opportunities for conversion.

A **bad reputation** produces not only lower conversion rates, but could result in all of your email being blocked.

Your sender reputation holds you accountable to your recipients, their inbox provider, and any other entities that facilitate the delivery of your email.

Managing your sender reputation is as simple as following best practices for the three areas that impact your email quality:

**How you
generate leads**

**How you
send email**

**How you maintain your
email marketing list**

Keep in mind that sender reputation is a holistic measurement
so it's important to commit to all of these practices to optimize results.

Best Practices for Lead Generation

Explicit Permission – The number one rule: only send marketing email to recipients that have provided explicit permission for you to do so. The permission must be freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous. Try to always use an electronic form to keep record of the consent, even when recipients request marketing from you in person.

- **Freely given –** Truly voluntary. Denial or withdrawal of permission must not imply negative consequences for the recipient.
- **Specific –** Recipients should know the specific purpose for which they are providing their email address, and if there is more than one purpose, there should be separate consent for each.
- **Informed –** Details of the permission must be clear and distinct from other text - not buried inside a paragraph or terms of service.
- **Unambiguous –** Permission must be indicated through an affirmative act or declaration, preferably a checkbox that is defaulted to un-ticked. A pre-ticked box or lack of objection (e.g. "they didn't say they *didn't* want marketing…") does not constitute permission.

Collecting email addresses from an association, affiliates, joint venture partner, or purchasing addresses through a list provider is not considered a source of opt-in. Use of these types of sources is a fundamentally poor practice because there is no opportunity for the recipient to provide explicit permission.

Email Confirmation (AKA Double Opt-In) – As an extension of permission, confirm each recipient's identity and intent to receive marketing on the first email you send them by asking them to click a link or take some other affirmative action. This ensures that the person that filled out the form is actually responsible for the email address they provided.

Setting Expectations – Set clear and specific expectations at the time of opt-in for the recipient about your emails:

- What will the emails be about?
- When and how often will you send them?
- Who will they come from? (Your sender domain, branding, logos, colors etc.)

Best Practices for Sending Email

Meeting Expectations – Consistently deliver mail that meets the recipient's expectations for content, frequency and identity that you set when you obtained permission. If any of this is going to change (e.g. branding or logo update) be sure to let your recipients know. If the changes are significant, reacquire permission and set new expectations at that time.

Segmenting – Segment your lists according to differences in content, frequency, and identity so that recipients only receive what they requested. This also allows you to cater to recipients with different interest levels or email preferences.

Subject Lines – Describe plainly and clearly what you are sending. Subject lines that contain spam-like keywords, or are misleading or vague will likely get flagged as spam.

Whitelisting – Ask your recipients to add your sending address to their safe sender list or address book.

Unsubscribing – Make it easy to unsubscribe. When recipients find it hard or impossible to unsubscribe, they often mark the email as spam. A single unsubscribe is better than a single spam compliant, any day!

Legal Awareness – Be aware of and comply with email related laws that apply to you AND to your recipients (e.g. CAN-SPAM, CASL, GDPR, etc.). Remember that sending email is often international and you'll need to respect the laws of the destination as well as the origin. Legal consequences aside, non-compliant emails are a red flag for spam filters and recipient inbox providers.

Objectionable Content – Avoid objectionable content, even if your recipients have agreed to view it. Spam filters will often pickup on objectionable keywords, regardless of your relationship with the recipient.

Best Practices for List Maintenance

Regularly remove the following high risk recipients from your marketing list:

Unengaged Recipients

As a general rule, these are recipients that have not opened or clicked in the past 6 months. Depending on how often you send, a recipient could be considered unengaged if they don't have any activity after one month, for example, if you send to them daily. Attempt to re-engage with these recipients early by offering a special promotion or incentive to show signs of interest - don't wait until they become too much of a risk to send them marketing.

Role Accounts

Email addresses that consist of a role instead of a name, like info@, admin@, or sales@. Role accounts are often shared or passed down as people change roles at a company, which means you could be sending marketing to someone without permission.

Lost or Forgotten Recipients

Permission degrades over periods of inactivity. Don't send to an old list of recipients if you haven't been emailing them within the past 6 months, even if you obtained explicit permission at the beginning of your relationship.

The Hard Truth

Many senders struggle with letting go of these "leads". Don't be tempted to hang on to unengaged or other high risk recipients. This only hurts your inbox placement with prospects that have the highest potential for conversion - your *active* and *engaged* recipients.

The Best Email is Both Wanted and Expected

How you generate leads, how you send email, and how you maintain your email marketing list all impact your sender reputation and inbox placement. Be sure to commit to best practices in each of these categories to maintain an excellent reputation.
If you feel unsure about how to implement a particular practice, let transparency be your guide. Be clear about your intentions and consistently meet your recipient's expectations.

At the end of the day, your goal is to make sure every email is both wanted and expected by the recipient.

With this approach, you'll develop trust with both your recipients and their inbox providers – trust that will benefit your business far beyond just email deliverability.

What is Act!?

Act! is the perfect fit for your business and industry, because it's flexible.
Unlike other CRM platforms, you have the freedom to tailor an Act! experience
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