



World Class Email Marketing

White Paper

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Executive summary

Today if you send email it is no longer guaranteed that your intended recipient will receive it. This includes not only large commercial sends to loyal customers, but newsletters and personal email as well.

The explosion in volume of Unsolicited Bulk Email, also known as spam, has become an enormous problem around the world. One estimate says that up to 5 million unique spam mailings occur each month, resulting in trillions of unsolicited emails in consumers' mailboxes. The response to spam by the Internet email community has been unplanned, hasty, ad-hoc, and highly variable from one SMTP server (an email server) to another.

And most of this response has been, to date, inappropriate. The primary weapons being used to fight spam are blacklists and content filters. The problem with the currently prevailing anti-spam filters is, of course, that they are FAR from perfect. To one degree or another they mistakenly label legitimate email as spam.

Therefore it is your job to make sure your email is not perceived as spam. To that end, it must be permission-based, adhere to ISP guidelines and best practices, and be as free of spam-like content as possible. You also must respect consumer privacy and work to control blacklists and content filters. If you fail to do this, your vital marketing messages and customer communications may never reach their intended audience.

Introduction

Intended Audience

This White Paper outlines general information you need know in order to send legitimate bulk email and maximize your send success rate when doing so. It is also a little bit about writing good email since the final filter your email has to get past is the recipient's delete key.

What this paper is not

This paper is not a how-to concerning high tech eMail and other tricks. Such techniques are only useful for some people some of the time.

Rather, world-class email marketing is built upon meeting the necessities required to reach all people all of the time: first, getting the message delivered and, second, making sure that the message is what the customers want so they will pay attention to it. Marketing is, in the end, the competition for people's attention.

A Caveat

Much of the specific information you need to know we consider proprietary and/or is bound up in Non-Disclosure Agreements and/or is left out to protect us from the guilty. Nevertheless, this White Paper is a reasonably thorough GENERAL explanation for its intended audience.

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The Problem

Today if you send email it is no longer guaranteed that your intended recipient will receive it. This includes not only large commercial sends to loyal customers, but newsletters and personal email as well. Given the vast increases in the speed, capacity, and reliability of the Internet, plus the paper-like legal status now accorded to email, one could reasonably ask, "What went wrong?" Here is the multi-part answer:

- The explosion in volume of **Unsolicited Bulk Email**, also known as **spam**, has become an enormous problem around the world. One estimate says that up to 5 million unique spam mailings occur each month, resulting in trillions of unsolicited emails in consumers' mailboxes.

Note: You will frequently see the phrase **Unsolicited Commercial Email** (or **UCE**). Much spam is commercial in nature, but a sizable portion of it is not. Therefore this paper will stick with the term Unsolicited Bulk Email (**UBE**).

- The response to spam by the Internet email community has been unplanned, hasty, ad-hoc, and highly variable from one **SMTP server** (an email server) to another. And most of this response has been, to date, inappropriate.
- The primary weapons being used to fight spam are **blacklists** and **content filters**. Once labeled as spam, email can be refused by the recipient's SMTP server and either **failed** during the send or **bounced back** later to the sender as a separate email. Or it can be buried in a "junk mail" folder, unlikely to ever be seen. Worst of all, it can be accepted by the SMTP server but quietly deleted unbeknownst to either the recipient or the sender.

"For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong."

H. L. Mencken

The problem with the currently prevailing anti-spam filters is, of course, that they are FAR from perfect. To one degree or another they mistakenly label legitimate email as spam, something known in the trade as a **false positive**. When a false positive occurs and the email is failed or bounced, the sender can find out and take corrective steps, but when a legitimate email goes to the spam bucket or is quietly deleted then no one will know it has been lost regardless of that email's real importance.

You want to send legitimate email, but various types of filters (some of them human) may perceive it as spam. Therefore your job is to make your email *not be perceived as spam*. To that end it must be permission-based, adhere to ISP guidelines and best practices, and be as free of spam-like content as possible. The following sections examine these points in more detail.