

Every day, e-mail deliverability is becoming exponentially more challenging as the ever-growing amount of unsolicited mail continues to flood inboxes. ISPs, such as AOL, Yahoo!, and Hotmail, and company e-mail servers are combating the onslaught of unwanted mail by developing increasingly sophisticated methods of weeding out the “good” mail from the “bad.”

Fortunately, as a legitimate e-mail sender, there are steps that you can take to make sure e-mails reach your intended audience. Below are some helpful tips to remember when sending e-mail.

How to make sure your e-mails are delivered:

Get Whitelisted and Monitor Blacklists

Major ISPs maintain whitelists, a list of all valid and accepted e-mail addresses, which allows e-mail to be delivered even if spam filters are in place. Senders can apply for whitelist status with ISPs and should frequently monitor lists to make sure they remain in good standing. Conversely, a blacklist is an explicit list of senders from whom e-mail will not be accepted or delivered. Occasionally, legitimate e-mail senders are placed on blacklists. Getting removed from such a list simply requires monitoring the lists to see if you’ve been placed on one and applying to the list holder for removal.

Keep E-mail Lists Clean

People change e-mail addresses frequently making it a certainty that today’s clean e-mail list will contain bad addresses by tomorrow. To minimize the negative impact of undeliverable addresses, all invalid addresses should be removed from a list before e-mails go out. Most ISPs are very sophisticated about tracking failed delivery attempts and will blacklist a sender if they send too many undeliverable e-mails.

Give Subscribers Control

Give people control over what they get (topics) and how often they get it (frequency) to ensure they will welcome and accept e-mail from you. Allow people to subscribe to the specific information they want to receive. They should also be able to control how often they get messages and have an easy way to unsubscribe to e-mail updates.

Get and Confirm Permission

Permission to send to a person is inherently given when they subscribe to receive e-mail updates on specific topics. This is called “opting-in.” Once a subscriber has finalized their selections, their subscriptions should be confirmed via e-mail. Taking it a step further, subscribers should also be able to easily send confirmation to you that they indeed want to receive e-mails from your organization. This process of confirming permission two times, or “double opt-in,” reduces the potential for problems with blacklists that are imposing stricter permission standards for bulk e-mail senders.

98% of e-mails sent through GovDelivery make it to recipients’ inboxes, compared to an industry average of 88.5%.*

*Source: ClickZ Network. www.clickz.com/stats/sectors/email/article.php/3496361.

Set Up ISP Test Inboxes

Setting up e-mail test accounts with the major ISPs is an easy way to determine whether your e-mails are ending up in recipients' inboxes or in their junk or bulk e-mail folders. Before sending an e-mail to your entire list, simply send the e-mail to your test inboxes and see where they land. If the junk e-mail folder is the final destination or the e-mail gets blocked, you can pinpoint the source of the problem and make necessary changes before sending to your entire list.

Understand Spam Filters or Know What's in Your E-mails

Familiarize yourself with common items that most spam filters screen out. Overuse of capital letters, exclamation points, and words such as "free" are sure to land an e-mail in a bulk or junk e-mail folder. Senders should scan content and message templates through several different spam filters to identify possible words, phrases, and patterns that may trigger filters. In addition, avoid sending attachments or embedded images in e-mails because larger e-mails have a greater chance of being labeled as spam.

Use Deliverability Reports to Get Results

On-demand reports about deliverability are critical to understanding the effectiveness of e-mail sends. Reports should quantify the number of successful deliveries, invalid e-mail addresses, and bounced or undeliverable e-mails.

GovDelivery Deliverability Checklist

GovDelivery ensures your e-mails get delivered by:

- ✓ Providing an opt-in option for subscribers.
- ✓ Monitoring bounced e-mails and proactively removing invalid e-mail addresses from lists by validating addresses with ISPs before sending (ISPs track failed delivery attempts and blacklist senders if they send to bad addresses. Invalid addresses include ones that people are no longer using).
- ✓ Maintaining whitelist status and good relationships with major ISPs.
- ✓ Monitoring blacklists and promptly removing senders from them.
- ✓ Adhering to federally mandated CAN-SPAM e-mail compliance standards.

GovDelivery also provides on-demand reports for clients to monitor their deliverability

GovDelivery is the world's leading e-mail subscription management system designed specifically for the public sector and sends millions of e-mails every month for organizations worldwide including the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Labor, State, U.K. Parliament, California Department of Insurance, Texas Department of Health and Human Services, Macomb County (MI), City of St. Paul (MN), and many more.



To learn more about GovDelivery, visit www.govdelivery.com;
e-mail info@govdelivery.com; call U.S. 866-276-5583 or
U.K. 0800032 5769