



Making
Deliverability Manageable



What affects your deliverability?

Deliverability is about reaching the inbox essentially.

Whilst it can be hard to get right, and the rules change frequently, there are a number of things you can do to reach the inbox and this short guide looks at 5 of the main ones!

1. IP and Headers
2. Send volumes and patterns
3. Data quality
4. Engagement levels
5. Content



1. IP and headers

Your IP (the address you send from) and sending domain reputation are checked by the internet services providers to try and prevent spam.

You may share an IP address with other senders from your email service provider or have one dedicated for your brand or group of companies.

A dedicated IP means you need to build up the reputation (particularly with Hotmail and Gmail) and will be solely responsible for your own IP's reputation.

A shared one means you may benefit from the good reputation of other senders on that IP as well the bad ones.

Your sending domain will also be taken into consideration.



Maintaining a good IP reputation

Your IP reputation is like a balloon – takes time to build up but it can be gone in an instant!

The following actions will help maintain your reputation:

- **Authentication** verifies your identity and allows you to claim responsibility for the mailing
 - DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM) or Sender Policy Framework (SPF)
- **Data hygiene** – so avoid invalid emails, blacklists and spam complaints
- Using a **consistent** from / reply to address to build recipient familiarity and trusted reputation

Check out senderscore.org for more info on your sending IP



2. Send volumes and patterns

Your send volume and sending patterns are monitored by Internet Service Providers who are looking to see how you behave over time.

A steady flow of emails will serve you better than low activity levels interspersed with spikes.

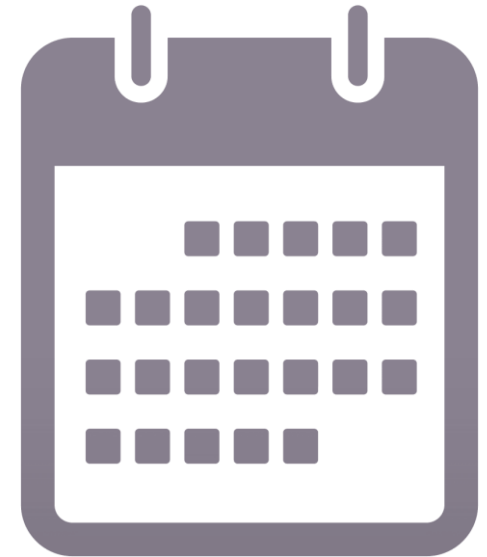
Whilst this can't always be avoided (using shared domains do help with this if you tend to send in batches), you can take steps to maintain a better sending pattern.



Maintaining send volumes and patterns

The following tips will help you to keep a warm IP and reputation:

- Undertake consistent, regular sending
- Send regularly (at least weekly) if you have a dedicated IP
- Use triggered campaigns in between newsletters to help keep IP warm
- Don't send large volumes on new or problem IPs
- Throttle sends so they go out as steady flow rather than a big batch



3. Data quality

The quality of your data will be reflected in the sends you make and the way recipients engage with your emails.

The two primary reasons for ending up in the junk box are:

- You trip a spam filter (see content later)
- Recipients report you as spam

If recipients are not expecting your email, they are much more likely to report you as spam so start the relationship off correctly.



Maintaining data quality

To ensure your data remains of a high quality:

- Make sure permission is collected at sign up and use a double or at least confirmed opt process
 - Back this up with a welcome email that sets and manages expectations
 - Look at all relevant data collection regulations as well
- Send regularly so recipients don't forget who you are
- Regularly clean bounces and immediately remove abuse complaints
 - An Email Service Provider such as Mailchimp or Constant Contact will usually manage this for you
- Request to be added to personal whitelists
- Use a preference centre so recipients can subscribe only to messages they want



4. Engagement

All ISPs look at recipient interactions and engagement levels as an indicator of the quality of your communications.

Gmail especially will look at this as a deciding factor as to whether you reach the inbox or the junk folder.

Sending emails to your most engaged recipients first and monitoring ongoing engagement levels is a great way to help deliverability.

Of course the best way to engage recipients is with relevant, timely content and this may mean segmentation of data.



Encouraging engagement

These tips will help to improve your deliverability, especially with ISPs that have a strong focus on recipient interactions and engagement

- Send valuable and relevant content
 - Segment your data and use different messaging to increase responses
- Remove inactive addresses – look at your sales cycle to decide when is inactive for your business
- Target unengaged recipients with specific messaging
- Send timely emails
 - When recipients are likely to be interested and opening newsletters
 - Trigger other communications



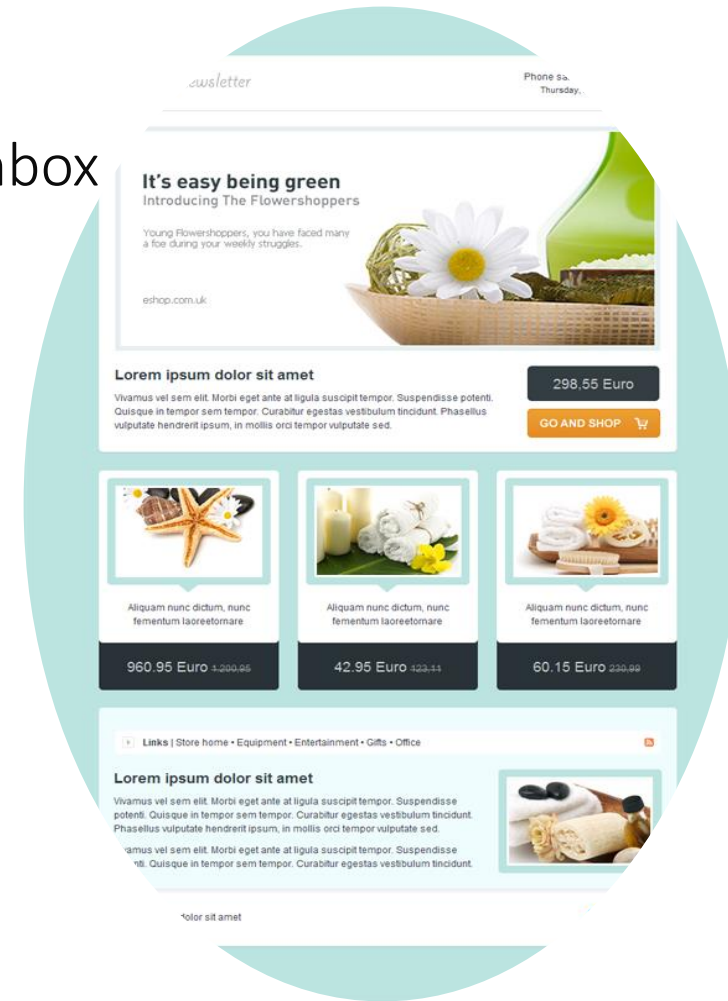
5. Email content

Your email content is, of course, central to how you reach the inbox and affects many of the other points discussed.

If you continually send irrelevant messages that are not of interest to your recipients, they are more likely to report you as spam at worst, and just not open your emails at best.

Everything about your email should be as relevant as it possibly can to your recipients, from the subject line to the branding and of course the copy, images and calls to action!

Think about adding value rather than simply promoting!



Creating compelling content

This is worth an entire guide but here's some quick tips on improving your email content for deliverability:

- Don't look like a spammer
 - Avoid one big image, excessive punctuation, link shorteners and typed URLs
- Make it easy to unsubscribe
 - Put an additional unsubscribe link in the header and use a preference centre
- Avoid sending irrelevant messages that are unlikely to be well received
- Always read the email as if you were your recipients asking, 'What's in it for me?'

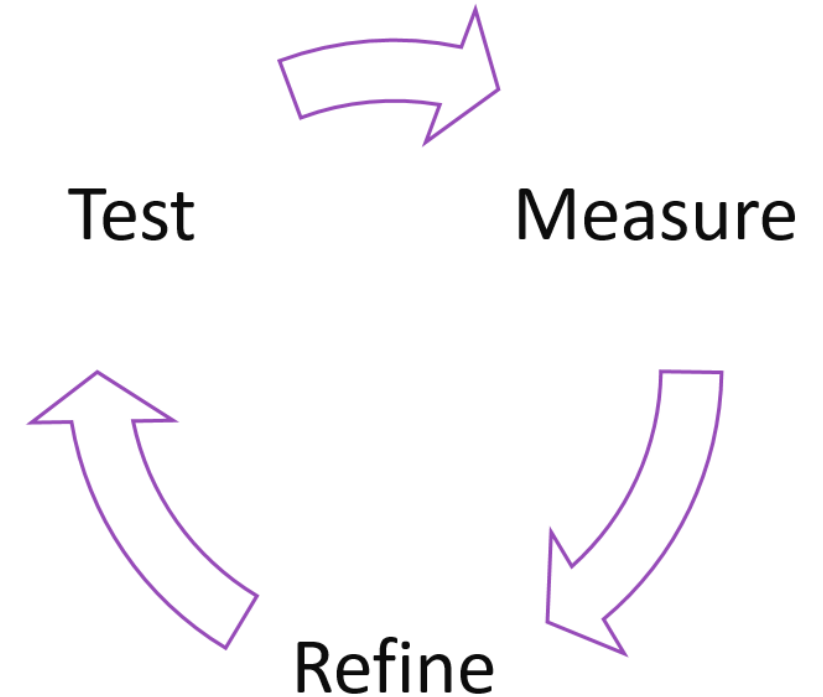


Summary

I hope this guide has been useful in providing some insights and ideas on reaching the inbox.

The most important things are to:

- Collect and maintain permission to email
- Set and manage expectations
- Provide timely and relevant content
- Test constantly



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If you would like assistance developing your email marketing strategy, Julie can help you.

Whether you are looking for a one off interactive session to put together an email strategy, someone to get you up and running with a provider and templates or ongoing deployment support, Julie is able to assist. Julie is independent and will work with your chosen Email Service Provider.

Julie Joseph is The Virtual Marketeer, an Email Marketing specialist and Marketing Mentor. She has over 20 years sales and marketing experience and is a member of the Institute of Direct Marketing.

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