

Email Delivery Rules Checklist

By Jason Conn

- To whom do you send your newsletter?
 - If you care about your subscribers and your reputation, send messages only to those people who really want to read it.
 - An opt-in email list will solve unwanted email problems 90% of the time because your message is unlikely to be marked as SPAM.
 - If you offer your site visitors a chance to subscribe to your newsletter, make sure it is a confirmed subscription.
- Review your 'From' and 'Subject' fields
 - The 'From' field should contain your company's name and/or the title of your newsletter This helps subscribers to recognize your messages immediately.
 - Upon receiving your message, the reader should be able to answer, "Yes" to the question, "Do I know who this is from?"
 - Likewise, your 'Subject' field must include an attractive line Choosing the right 'Subject' line is really important because it often determines whether your messages are opened or not.
- Control your message content
 - Make sure that all of your emails include current contact information, including phone numbers, email addresses and even your physical address.
 - Heck to see if any words in your subject line or message text trigger SPAM filters.
 - You can see a list of the most popular SPAM triggers by Mequoda.
 - In addition, Lyris offers a free service to check your message content for SPAM triggers.
 - Nowadays, ISPs use smart SPAM filtering systems, so you shouldn't avoid every potential SPAM content word if it is an important part of your message.
 - Though their usage can add SPAM signals to your email, if your message does not score a critical number of such SPAM signals, your email likely won't be filtered.
 - Don't be afraid to use a few common SPAM triggering words if your message will greatly benefit from them.
- Use only absolutely necessary graphics in your message
 - Spammers and legitimate email marketers alike use loaded images as a metric – to check valid email accounts and calculate open rates.

- As a result, email programs and web-based services don't download images by default.
- This means your readers won't see your images unless they click on an option to "display images" in your message.
- While you shouldn't overload your message with images, if you insert some relevant text into the 'alt' attribute of the image, there's a chance it will be downloaded by potential readers and your newsletter will be read.
- Do not attach files to your message
 - Most savvy Internet users will consider files sent via email too suspicious to open.
 - A better idea is to use a Web link (be sure to check its availability before you send your message!)
- Deliver a perfect user experience with your newsletter
 - Make sure your newsletter layout rendered perfectly by all important Web-based email service providers and email clients.
- To ensure compliance with the CAN-SPAM Act
 - Your newsletter must be "opt-out" In her words, be sure to include a valid 'unsubscribe' link in your message.
 - Your unsubscribe requests should be honored immediately.
 - What's more, consider making your unsubscribe look more like a landing page.
 - Subscribe to feedback loop services with all important email providers, such as Yahoo!, AOL, MS HotMail/Live, Comcast and others.
 - Take care to process any abuse emails regularly and quickly.
- Maintenance
 - Maintain your subscriber list to keep your unknown user rates down.
 - Regularly remove un-deliverable addresses that bounce because ISPs and ESPs track bounce rates and may list your IP if you repeatedly attempt to deliver messages to closed or non-existing subscriber mailboxes.
- Testing Delivery
 - Be sure to test message delivery from your domain with all the major Email Service Providers (ESPs).
 - Testing deliverability is easy Create test emails and send your messages to them. You'll see at once if your messages end up in SPAM folders.

- If you find an issue, try to solve it. Check to see if your domain is present on any known blacklists that ISPs use
- If you've been blacklisted, get in touch with the company that maintains the blacklist and follow its instructions to be removed.
- Another way to avoid blacklisting status is to contract with a mail reputation service in order to add your IP addresses to various trusted lists.
- Our experience has taught us that subscribing to any of the above reputation services makes sense only if you are really a bulk email sender.
- Otherwise, adhering to the other smart email practices described here should be enough to ensure you maintain email