



WHITE PAPER

Why Emails Aren't Reaching Inboxes

Three Ways to Improve Deliverability

April 2025

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Three Ways to Improve Deliverability

Email marketing remains a powerful tool for engaging with customers, but evolving email filtering rules and stricter spam detection are making it harder to reach inboxes. The core objective of an Email Service Provider (ESP) like Gmail, Yahoo, and Microsoft Outlook is to optimize email placement for engagement (opens and clicks) while minimizing email annoyance. Enhanced mechanisms—such as Apple's Mail Privacy Protection (MPP) and Gmail's categorization of promotional emails—are shifting how emails are received, often leading to reduced visibility and engagement rates for marketers.

Exhibit 1 - Recent Changes to Email Mechanisms by Provider

Overview of major changes to email filtering and spam prevention impacting deliverability

 Gmail Anti-Spam Enhancements (2023) Google's AI-powered anti-spam advancements (i.e., RETVec) improved Google's spam detection by 38%+	 Yahoo Spam Rate Threshold (2024) Yahoo mandates that bulk senders (5,000+ email sends/day) not exceed set spam rate thresholds of 0.3%	 Apple Mail Inbox Categorization (2024) Apple's automatic inbox categorization (in iOS 18.2) organizes emails into tabs such as Primary and Promotions
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This is particularly concerning for companies that rely on cold outreach or third-party data sources, for example:

- **E-commerce and direct-to-consumer brands** that depend on email for customer acquisition and retargeting
- **Financial services and insurance providers** that leverage third-party lists for lead generation
- **Retailers and multi-brand marketplaces** that depend on email promotions and transactional messaging
- **B2B companies** that run outbound sales and lead nurturing campaigns in which inbox placement directly affects pipeline growth
- **Managed email service providers (B2B2C)** that aggregate owned and third-party data for marketing to recipients with varying degrees of engagement

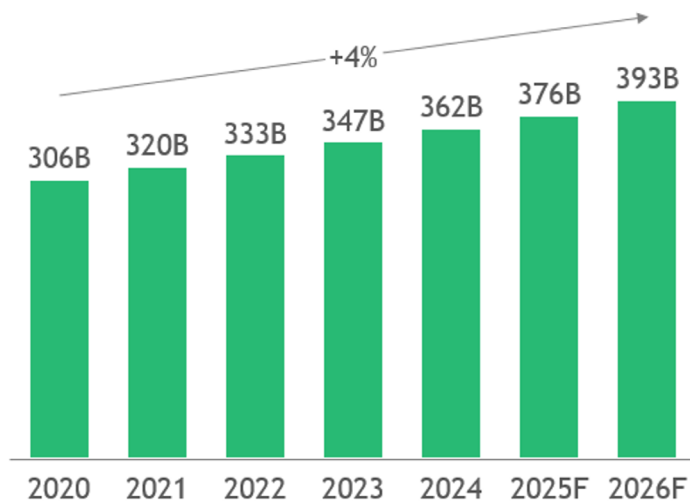
Improving email deliverability is crucial to ensuring that messages reach potential customers' primary inboxes. We've uncovered three key issues companies face that prevent emails from reaching consumers and have identified best practices to combat these challenges for improved email deliverability.

#1: Poor Send Optimizations Resulting in Overloaded Inboxes

Growing overall email volume impacts performance across marketers (Exhibit 2). Sending large amounts of email can lead to spikes in email volume that trigger spam filters, reducing deliverability. Over-emailing disengaged contacts further degrades sender reputation as fewer users engage or mark email as spam, causing inbox placement rates to plummet.

Exhibit 2 - Measure of Global Email Volume

Global email volume per day (billions)



Source: Validity

Best Practice Solution: Segment email list mix by user engagement and dynamically adjust email throttling to reduce excessive outreach.

Sending too many emails to low-engagement recipients is a surefire way to reduce deliverability. Companies should balance the mix of recipients in a way that prioritizes more frequent email sends to users with a higher likelihood to engage (e.g., those who have recently opened an email or visited the company's webpage) over less engaged users. Using multiple sending domains allows companies to better segment high- and low-engagement recipients by preventing any single domain from becoming overburdened, enabling a more gradual warm-up process. Performance-based throttling, where email send rates adjust dynamically based on real-time engagement data, ensures a steady flow of emails without overwhelming providers. An automated monitoring feedback loop further refines throttling by scaling down sends when performance drops, preventing reputation damage.

#2: Bad Email List Hygiene Increases Bounce Rates, Negatively Impacting Deliverability

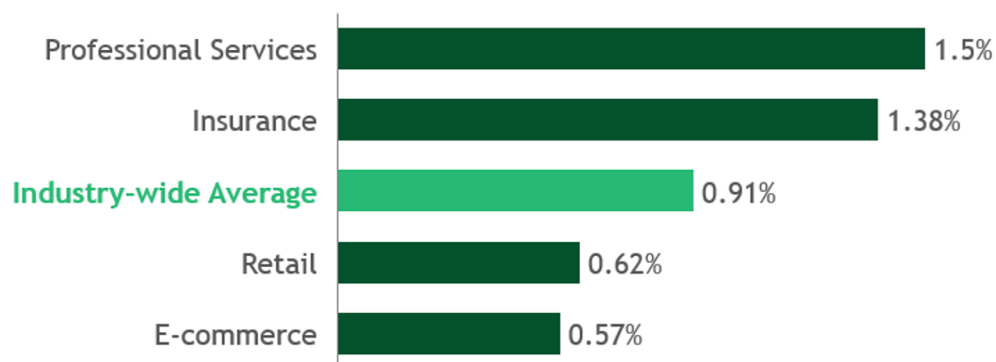
Sending emails to outdated or unverified email addresses leads to high bounce rates, damaging sender reputation and email deliverability (Exhibit 3). Without proper list validation, businesses continue to reach out to bad addresses, signaling poor list quality to email providers. This results in higher spam filtering and reduced campaign effectiveness.

Best Practice Solution: Use real-time validation tools to remove invalid addresses before sending to reduce bounces and maintain a strong sender reputation.

A well-maintained email list is a cornerstone of strong deliverability. Companies must automate validation to remove invalid, duplicate, or inactive addresses before repeat sending. Real-time list cleaning tools detect and eliminate hard bounces to help maintain a high sender reputation. Organizations can prioritize validation for email lists with lower performance metrics to focus improvement efforts. Additionally, implementing double opt-in requests (i.e., requiring subscribers to verify their email via a confirmation email) ensures recipients confirm their interest before being added to mailing lists, reducing spam complaints and automatically improving inbox placement with most major mail servers.

Exhibit 3 - Industry Benchmarks of Bounce Rate

Overall Industry-wide bounce rate and bounce rates across select industries as of December 2023



Source: Mailchimp

#3: Limited Personalization Leads to One-Size-Fits-All Messaging, Reducing Engagement

Challenges with deploying personalized email marketing cause companies to rely on static, one-size-fits-all messaging instead of dynamic content in email marketing. Without user or cohort-level personalization and interactive elements, emails fail to capture user interest, leading to lower engagement. This weakens sender reputation, which directly impacts email deliverability.

Best Practice Solution: Automate testing of personalization and dynamic content while driving engagement opportunities through interactive elements, such as call-to-action links and embedded social profiles.

Personalization can transform static emails into dynamic, high-impact touchpoints to improve user interaction and support better inbox placement. Companies can scale email personalization by leveraging AI-driven automation to optimize content, timing, and engagement. Organizations should implement workflows that dynamically tailor emails based on user behavior—utilizing data signals such as past purchases, browsing history, and demographics. Automated A/B testing can help refine subject lines and content variations by identifying the most effective messaging for different audience segments. Incorporating interactive elements, such as embedded links and calls to action, further boosts engagement, signaling to email service providers (ESPs) that emails are valuable. By applying these strategies, companies can enhance deliverability and campaign effectiveness.

Conclusion

Improving email deliverability is an ongoing effort that requires careful monitoring, strategic segmentation, and a commitment to quality engagement. Organizations must be proactive in optimizing their send strategies, maintaining optimal list hygiene, and scaling personalization efforts. By implementing best practices, companies can maximize the reach and impact of email marketing campaigns.



True personalization requires creating experiences at scale, which get fine-tuned with each successive interaction and empower customers to get what they want.

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