

Optimise your email delivery systems to improve your marketing return

By [JD Engelbrecht](#), issued by [Everlytic](#)

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Email marketing is the most cost-effective form of marketing for most businesses, offering unparalleled return on investment (ROI). Especially for consumer-focused businesses, newsletters have never been more important than they are now. You've put the time in to test email subject lines and links, you've engaged a writer for creative copy, and you have a well-designed template. But you're not seeing the returns you hoped for.

If your emails are blocked before they even reach your audience, the investment you've already made is going to waste. The scariest thing might be that you are unaware that your messages are going to junk.

By optimising your delivery systems, your chances of click-throughs are much higher – and that results in higher engagement and, ultimately, higher sales.

The right service provider improves your chances of delivery

Email delivery is more complicated than most people realise. Let's consider a postal service, with a mailman who has been asked to deliver mail to residents of an apartment building. If the mailman is trusted, the building supervisor lets him in. If the mailman abuses that trust, bringing in unsolicited messages or doesn't follow the building rules, then the supervisor could deny him entry. This is exactly how spam monitoring organisations act with regard to email services.

Building supervisors are much more likely to allow in a mailman who can show they're authorised to deliver – a process called email authentication. IP addresses are checked to see if they align with the email service provider (ESP) delivering the mail on behalf of the sender. When emails are properly authenticated, they are less likely to be marked as spoofing or phishing. Both the ESP and the sender must have good reputations for mail to be authenticated.

Actively manage your database

But authentication isn't enough on its own. If a trusted mailman delivers poor-quality mail, unsolicited spam, or tries to deliver to residents who have already moved out, recipients will start to complain and the building supervisor will eventually revoke the mailman's access by blocking the IP address – affecting all the other email senders who played by the rules but used the same mailman as someone who didn't. If your business sends emails to old domains or spam trap email addresses, the spam monitoring service notices that either you or your mailman are not actively managing your database.

You can keep your database clean by monitoring bouncebacks and removing undeliverable email addresses.

Changing spam definitions makes effective emails more important than ever

We all agree that spam is unwanted mail. Previously, spam was seen as mail that you didn't request, but now the definition has broadened to also include mail from senders you previously consented to but no longer interact with. So if a recipient signs up for a mailing list but doesn't open or interact with mail from that sender over a period of months, the sender may also be guilty of sending spam. Spam monitoring organisations may act against you as a result. In a worst-case scenario, you could be blacklisted, which blocks your mail from being delivered at all, and – unless you're monitoring very closely – be unaware this action has been taken against you.

If your promotions are no longer performing as expected, or your invoices aren't being delivered to your clients, you may have been blacklisted by a spam monitoring organisation.

The cause of the issue can be difficult to detect, and businesses often take a week or longer to realise they have been blacklisted, which can substantially affect revenue. Blacklisting is too often detected because of its consequences, rather than proactive email management to prevent it.

How email service providers mitigate this risk

A credible email service provider such as Everlytic adds its own positive reputation to each email it delivers while monitoring feedback from large mailbox providers such as Gmail and Outlook to check that its IP addresses are welcome. ESPs have hundreds of IP addresses, so if one IP is blacklisted, other addresses remain usable. If content from a particular IP address is marked as spam, ESPs need to examine that content to maintain their own reputation. They may ask senders to do a re-engagement campaign or may choose not to work with some senders.

ESPs don't edit or delete content. Their job is to give senders the best chance of having their emails delivered. Your emails are delivered using a range of different IP addresses – so that if one IP address is blocked the other emails still get through. Leading ESPs prioritise more engaged recipients on their best IP addresses with the highest reputations so that delivery to your most loyal customers is assured.

What to do when you're blacklisted

If you're blacklisted, it's important that you take action to protect your own company's reputation and improve the effectiveness of your communication.

- Look at the delivery rates of your email to see whether it's going through to senders
- Clean up your database by removing old email addresses and corralling recipients who have not opened or clicked on any emails from you for a long time.
- Check the credibility of your email service provider and consider using one with higher quality credentials.
- Engage with a leading ESP to strategise.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JD Engelbrecht is managing director at Everlytic.

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