



MASTERING EMAIL DELIVERABILITY:

STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES



rpeorigin.com



833-FOR-RPEO



hello@rpeorigin.com

Copyright RPE Origin 2025

MONITOR YOUR EMAIL DELIVERABILITY



KATH PAY

international email
consultant and
deliverability expert
at Holistic Email
Marketing

You've likely heard the saying "What gets measured gets managed," and it's certainly true for email deliverability. Yet monitoring email deliverability is one of the most often overlooked steps, according to Kath Pay, an international email consultant and deliverability expert at Holistic Email Marketing and a member of the [Global Email Alliance](#).

All too often, enterprise companies don't set up a monitoring tool until they encounter an issue with deliverability. Instead, they rely on open rates and other surface-level metrics to monitor their email performance, which doesn't always show the full picture. Decreasing open rates could mean there's a deliverability issue, but it could also be a sign of list fatigue or a shift in audience needs or expectations.

Putting a monitoring tool in place before you need it can prevent a lot of headaches. It gives you a comprehensive look at the metrics that matter, including open rates, inbox placement, domain and IP reputation, spam traps, and more. Then, if you do have an issue, you can identify it and act quickly to resolve it.

"In the world of deliverability, time matters," Pay said. "The longer you have a problem and the longer it takes to start actioning that problem, the harder it is to fix it."

If you do encounter an issue and start working with a deliverability consultant to resolve it, the first thing they're going to recommend is putting a monitoring tool in place. If you proactively have a tool in place to monitor deliverability, you're one step ahead.

Another thing to consider: You might have a problem and not even realize it for a while, unless you have a deliverability tool in place.

"You don't know what you don't know," Pay said, and that's why monitoring deliverability is one of her top recommendations for enterprise senders.

AUTHENTICATE YOUR DOMAIN

Several major email clients — including Gmail, Yahoo, and Microsoft — have already put authentication requirements in place for large-volume senders, which includes many enterprise email marketers. Gmail defines large-volume senders as those sending over 5,000 messages a day, and they require domain authentication plus a low spam rate and other best practices to allow your emails through to Gmail accounts. Requirements from Yahoo and Microsoft are similar.

What is domain authentication and how do you accomplish it? In its simplest form, domain authentication proves that you're the sender you claim to be. Taking the extra steps for domain authentication helps keep your emails from being marked as spam or blocked by the email client.

While domain authentication is required for large senders to reach the inbox for major email clients, it's a good idea for email senders of all sizes. There are three components you can add to your Domain Name System (DNS) records to better protect your email:



SPF – Sender Policy Framework is a DNS record that tells other servers you are authorized to send email from your domain. Any IP addresses sending email from your domain should be listed here.



DKIM – DomainKeys Identified Mail adds a digital signature to your emails that confirms you are the one who sent it. There's both a public key and a private key stored in different places, and the receiving email client can digitally check them before letting the email through.



DMARC - Domain-Based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance is an added layer on top of SPF and DKIM that helps protect against domain spoofing and other cyberattacks. It provides instructions on what the receiving email client should do with a non-authenticated email from your domain.

If you don't already have domain authentication in place, talk with your email team and/or website team to get the process started.

PROTECT YOUR SENDER REPUTATION

If you have a monitoring tool in place, you're already one step ahead of many people in protecting your sender reputation. Sender reputation includes things like IP reputation, domain reputation, blocklists, email engagement metrics, and several other factors that can impact deliverability.

Most enterprise companies already have a dedicated IP for email marketing based on volume alone. If you don't, it's time to explore getting one. Having a dedicated IP means you have complete control over the IP reputation, unlike smaller businesses that are on shared IP addresses where the actions of one sender can negatively impact others. A dedicated IP is more expensive, and you need to have adequate volume to maintain a good reputation on that IP.

Domain reputation is also a factor, and it may require some conversation between your marketing team and other departments. If everyone is sending from the same domain, you could run into issues that affect your ability to reach the inbox with marketing messages. For example, if the sales team is sending cold outreach emails in bulk, it could harm your domain reputation. The same can be true if DNS records aren't properly configured or other tools, such as billing software or scheduling tools, are using your domain to send emails but aren't authenticated properly.

If your domain ends up on a blocklist, it's going to impact deliverability. The good news is, if you're following best practices for good deliverability, being put on a blocklist is unlikely. If you have a monitoring tool in place, you'll know about it quickly and be able to resolve the issue.

Spam complaints are another factor in your sender reputation. If you're sending email to a purchased list or an old list that hasn't been messaged in a while, recipients may mark your email as spam. The more spam complaints you get, the more it impacts your sender reputation and ability to reach the inbox.

KEEP YOUR LIST CLEAN

List health is a key factor in email deliverability, and often the first place a deliverability expert will evaluate when troubleshooting an issue. List health includes your acquisition strategies for growing the list and how you segment and manage the list over time.

If you're buying emails to grow your list, you're going to end up with deliverability issues. Yes, even if you're buying a list of people who supposedly opted in with whoever is selling you the list. The same goes for scraping emails from online sources — it doesn't end well. The best practice for list growth is a clear opt-in from people who want to hear from your brand. Yes, it takes longer to grow your list size that way, but it results in more engaged subscribers compared to shortcuts like buying a list.



“

IF YOU'RE BUYING EMAILS TO
GROW YOUR LIST, YOU'RE
GOING TO END UP WITH
DELIVERABILITY ISSUES

”

KEEP YOUR LIST CLEAN

List hygiene, which includes removing invalid email addresses and unengaged subscribers, is important. However, it can be a delicate balance at times. Yes, you want to remove any invalid email addresses regularly, plus watch out for spam trap addresses. However, Kath Pay says some brands go overboard with suppressing or removing unengaged subscribers.

She recommends looking beyond just opens and clicks when determining who is an unengaged subscriber. All too often, brands set criteria of “haven’t opened or clicked in X amount of time” and suppress everyone in that group from most or all of their email sends. In some cases, they might send a re-engagement campaign first to see if the subscriber wants to stay on the list.

However, if the brand is only looking at email engagement and not adding purchase history to the decision matrix, they could be removing valuable customers from the email list. Be sure to factor in all data points, including increased web traffic after an email send that isn’t tied to an email click. Many buyers will see the email in the inbox and go straight to the website, rather than clicking the email. So, don’t assume that someone is completely disengaged from your brand just because they aren’t opening or clicking emails.

Most importantly, Pay says, think about the customer experience as well when developing your unengaged subscriber strategy and deciding who to suppress or remove from your list. Consider how they may be interacting with your brand in other ways and why they may be less engaged with email. Make your re-engagement campaign strategy about them, and not about the brand.

LIST HYGIENE CAN BE A
DELICATE BALANCE.



SEND RELEVANT, ENGAGING EMAIL CONTENT

While opens aren't the only factor that impacts deliverability, they do matter. To keep your open rates up, make sure you're sending email content that your subscribers want to open and read.

Segmenting your audience based on their stated preferences, purchase history, or email engagement behaviors can help ensure the content they receive is relevant. That might mean fewer emails to each subscriber, but they're more likely to engage in those targeted emails. Segmentation can be key in maintaining good open rates, improving ROI, and reducing list fatigue.

Sending engaging email content includes writing strong subject lines and preheaders. An A/B testing strategy can help determine what types of subject lines your subscribers are most likely to open. Then, be sure your email content delivers on the promise of the subject line. If your subject lines capture the open but the email content doesn't align with it, your audience might stop opening your emails or even start marking them as spam.

What about all those trigger words you should avoid in subject lines? Sending a few emails with "free" in the subject line isn't going to cause deliverability issues if the rest of your email practices are solid. With domain authentication in place, spam trigger words are much less of a concern overall, unless a brand is already facing problems with getting to the inbox. However, Kath Pay notes that those trigger words can sometimes still be an issue for B2B marketers. They're often sending to corporate domains that each have their own customized filters and may still be using a list of spam trigger words.

Another aspect of sending engaging email content is your email design. Make sure you're following best practices for email design and have consistent brand standards so customers know the email is coming from you.

STAY CONSISTENT WITH EMAIL VOLUME

Email frequency and volume can be another factor in email deliverability for enterprise email marketers. The major email clients like consistency, and a huge spike in numbers raises red flags. If your email volume doubles or triples out of nowhere, the email clients will take notice and might flag you as spam.

The volume increase alone can be an issue, but the increased bounces and spam complaints that come along with it play a role as well. In her work as a deliverability expert, Kath Pay often sees those issues arise because the brand accidentally sent an email to the wrong list. That could mean they included inactive subscribers in the send or accidentally sent to the entire database. Mistakes happen, and sometimes they lead to deliverability issues. For some brands, it's not a mistake but rather a deliberate decision to add old addresses back to the list. That bigger list size doesn't matter if your emails aren't making it to the inbox!

Always consider your email volume and send frequency when planning your email calendar and segmentation strategy. If your email marketing is heavier in a specific season, make sure you work up to those larger numbers rather than suddenly tripling your volume in one week. If you discover a large list or segment that hasn't been messaged recently and needs to be added back in, incorporate those addresses slowly alongside highly engaged subscribers to avoid a volume spike that could lead to a deliverability issue.



MAKE UNSUBSCRIBING EASY

Successful email marketing programs are permission-based, and that means offering a simple and easy way for someone to revoke that permission by unsubscribing.

The unsubscribe link should be easy to find in your email footer, not buried in a bunch of fine print or semi-hidden with creative color combinations. A one-click unsubscribe has long been best practice, and it's now required by Gmail and Yahoo for bulk senders.

Making it easy for someone to unsubscribe helps reduce the number of inactive subscribers and reduces spam complaints. If you have a cumbersome unsubscribe process that requires multiple clicks or confirmations — or even worse, requires a subscriber to log in to your website — people may end up reporting your emails as spam rather than navigating your complicated unsubscribe process.

If your brand sends multiple types of emails to subscribers, you can offer a preference center that allows them to customize their email experience instead of unsubscribing from all emails. For example, a clothing retailer that sends emails for men, women, and children can offer a preference center that allows subscribers to choose which of those three email categories they want to receive. Giving subscribers a way to reduce the frequency of emails can keep them on your list and engaging with relevant content.



TAKE QUICK ACTION TO RESOLVE ANY ISSUES

If you encounter a deliverability problem, you need to first identify the issue then take quick action to resolve it. As noted above, if you have a monitoring tool in place, identifying the problem should be quick. If you don't have a tool in place, you can start with reviewing your list health, checking your sender reputation, and evaluating your sending strategy (list size, volume and frequency, segmentation, etc.)

Once you have some idea of what caused the issue, you can work to resolve it. That could mean using a list validation tool to clean up your list, changing how you segment your email audience, authenticating your domain, or working with other departments to restructure how different people and tools use your domain for sending email. If your domain is on a blocklist, you'll need to make any changes to your email practices and then request to be removed from the blocklist.

Once you've resolved the foundational elements impacting your deliverability, it's time to start sending again — but differently than before. You want to send to your most engaged subscribers in smaller batches first, then slowly increase your volume to include less engaged subscribers.

"You want to win back the trust of the email clients and make friends again with the ISPs," says Kath Pay.

The makeup and size of your initial sending segments will vary based on your email engagement data and typical sending frequency, but it's important to send to highly engaged subscribers first so they open your emails. That tells the email clients that your subscribers want your emails, and then additional sends that same day are more likely to land in the inbox. Email marketers use a similar strategy when warming up a new IP address to ensure it starts with a good reputation.

Pay advises that, depending on the size of your list, it could take months of this sending strategy to fully incorporate all subscribers back into regular sends. It's worth the time and effort to do it right and help your brand maintain good deliverability.



MAKE EMAIL DELIVERABILITY A PRIORITY

Email deliverability should be a priority for all enterprise email marketers. With the right technical setup for your DNS, a customer-focused sending strategy, and a deliverability monitoring tool in place, brands can consistently land in the inbox and maximize their email ROI.

ABOUT RPE ORIGIN

We are the agency the big guys use. We aim to be an indispensable partner for enterprise and agency clients who rely on email for success. Whether you need help choosing a new ESP, enhancing automated B2C or B2B customer journeys, or connecting data points across your tech stack, we help you move from simple to sophisticated to drive more revenue through email marketing.

NEED HELP ENSURING YOUR EMAILS REACH THE INBOX?

Contact our team to get the conversation started.

-  rpeorigin.com
-  833-FOR-RPEO
-  hello@rpeorigin.com