

The Best Way to Improve Email Deliverability (and Delivery)

by James Miller - Thursday, July 04, 2019

<https://www.searchbug.com/info/the-best-way-to-improve-email-deliverability-and-delivery/>

When it comes to email deliverability, there's a lot of obsession over the technical aspects of getting into the inbox: [email authentication](#), [IP address warmup](#), [sender reputation](#), and other things. All of these things are important for the success of your email campaigns. And, you want to make sure you're handling them correctly.

However, focusing on the technical side of email deliverability ([SPF](#), [DKIM](#), [DMARC](#)) makes a pretty big assumption: that you've got correct, [usable email addresses](#) in the first place.

[60% of customers intentionally give incorrect information](#) to companies. So, your biggest email deliverability issue is probably your database.

This issue is fairly easy to correct. But, before we talk about that, let's explore why bad data is really bad for email deliverability.

Dirty Data Hurts Email Deliverability and Delivery

First, whether or not people actually see your emails in their inbox and get an opportunity to open them is dependent on two things: [email delivery](#) and email deliverability.

What is email delivery?

- Email delivery is simply whether or not your email can actually be accepted by an email server. Invalid email addresses hurt email delivery because there's simply no email server to accept the email. It's like trying to land a plane where there's no airport.

The delivery determination is made before emails are ever sorted into the spam and inbox folders.

Validating email addresses improves your email delivery.

How to verify emails addresses:

1. Format your email lists as a .csv, .txt, or Excel file.
2. Upload your lists to a data processor, like [Searchbug](#).
3. Download your results. Often, your results will be returned in a few minutes.
4. Remove the bad email addresses from your list, and commence emailing.

We'll cover this in more detail further on. But these steps are the bones of the process.

What is email deliverability?

- Deliverability is whether or not your email lands in the inbox, the spam folder, or gets blocked altogether by the receiving mail server. This is where the technical stuff—email authentication, sender reputation, and such—makes all the difference. That’s how receiving email servers determine if your email is legitimate or not.

Configuring your email authentication and maintaining a good sender reputation is how you improve your email deliverability.

So, even though email delivery *technically* isn’t deliverability, email delivery has a big impact on your deliverability rates. If a whole bunch of your emails are simply undeliverable, all the deliverability stuff doesn’t even get a chance to work.

Therefore, if your email deliverability is low, the most likely culprit is dirty data. In most email programs, undeliverable emails are considered a deliverability metric. This means that the quality of your email database should be the *first* thing you check when trying to correct deliverability issues.

How to Improve Email Deliverability

Improving your email database involves two big processes: improving subscriber quality and improving email list quality.

Removing inactive subscribers

Improving your subscriber quality is something you can do internally, using just your email analytics software. It boils down to removing inactive subscribers from your list.

Inactive subscribers lower your overall email marketing performance. But, they also never open or engage with your emails. Mail services are becoming more sensitive to actions like deleting emails before opening them or leaving emails unopened forever. The actions indicate low quality emails, that might be spam. So, mail services like Gmail and Microsoft keep an eye on them.

Inactive subscribers exhibit these negative behaviors. So, they can impact your email deliverability in the long term. It’s best to just stop sending them emails.

The best way to do this is to establish a policy for determining when a subscriber becomes inactive and follow it relentlessly.

Your email analytics software should show you which email addresses have opened your emails and which ones are letting your emails rot. Use this to identify inactive subscribers and remove them.

Your policy will depend on your email program, and how often you send emails. If you send emails every day, you’ll want to remove people pretty quickly if they’re ignoring your emails. In this case, you may want to remove people from your list after just a few weeks of inactivity.

On the other hand, if you send a monthly email, it’s probably best to wait until you’ve sent someone at

least a handful of emails before labeling them inactive.

If you're nervous about cutting your list down, you can send a re-engagement email before you remove someone. But, most of the time, removing inactive subscribers will actually improve your email ROI.

You save time and money because you don't send emails to people who aren't going to respond anyway.

Verifying Email Addresses

Improving your email list quality requires adding [email verification](#) to your email process. However, it's well worth the extra effort. [Email validation](#) does several things for you:

- **Identifies invalid and fake email addresses.** Often, people will enter a fake email address with the correct syntax. So, the email address passes the syntax check. But, the email address could be something like "[get_lost@fooledyou.com](#)." An email verifier will identify these unusable email addresses.
- **Identifies catch-all email addresses. Catch-all emails are unmonitored inboxes that just accept any email they receive. There's nobody on the other end. So, there's no point in sending emails to these email addresses.**
- **Identifies abuse and spam trap emails.** These are the email addresses you really want to avoid. Sending emails to these email addresses can get you blacklisted and permanently damage your sender reputation. The only safe way to find these is with an email validator.

When you verify your email list, you'll stop wasting emails on these useless email addresses. And, that means better email marketing ROI.

How to Verify Email Addresses

There are two ways to validate email addresses: [bulk email verification](#) and [data integration](#).

Both can be equally effective. But, data integration enables you to automate the email validation process.

Verify Email Addresses with Bulk email verification

Batch processing is ideal if you manage and use your email lists manually. If you're primarily working in a spreadsheet editor, batch processing will probably fit your business the best.

How to validate email addresses with batch processing:

1. Format your email lists as a .csv, .txt, or Excel file. Separate the information into separate columns—one for first names, one for last names, one for email addresses, and so on.
2. Upload your lists to a data processor, like [Searchbug](#). Typically, data processors have an online, self-service portal where you can upload email lists in your browser.
3. Download your results. Most of the time, your results will be returned in a few minutes. The file

will be a comma-separated .csv file.

4. Remove the bad email addresses from your list, and commence emailing.

That's it. You'll see better email deliverability *and* performance once you've removed the dead email addresses from your list.

Verify email addresses with data integration

Data integration is a little bit more complex to implement. But, it pretty much automates the entire email validation process.

If you use a CRM or email service provider software for emailing, you can usually use data integration.

You simply connect your email program to your data processor via [API](#), and establish triggers for verifying email addresses. The most common trigger is when a new email address is added to your database.

Most email software has an interface for connecting an API. Or, they're at least compatible with APIs, even if you have to do a bit of coding to implement it. Fortunately, a good email validation API will usually use a custom API to connect to the data processor's system. There's no API key or anything like that.

Once you've got email validation integrated into your email system, you won't have to think about it. The process will fire automatically. Your email verifier will check email addresses as they're added to your lists. And, your email list will get cleaned consistently.

That way you only send emails to valid email addresses, and fewer of your emails will end up in the spam folder.

So, there it is. You have to account for bad data to completely solve deliverability issues. If you implement some form of email verification, you'll get better deliverability rates.

What to do now

Searchbug checks email addresses in real time. So, the data is always current and dependable.

If you need [batch email verification](#) or [data integration](#), check out the [Searchbug business services](#).

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