



Email

Deliverability

Mastery Blueprint for Startups & SMBs

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◆ Introduction ◆

Welcome! 🙌 You've taken the first step toward **mastering email deliverability** and ensuring your messages reach inboxes, not spam folders. Whether you're a startup, an SMB, or an experienced sender, this guide will help you establish **strong email deliverability practices**.

Email remains one of the most effective marketing channels. However, without the right setup and strategy, your emails could be ignored, blocked, or worse—marked as spam. This **blueprint provides a practical, step-by-step approach** to optimizing your email sending strategy, minimizing risks, and **maximizing engagement**.

What You'll Learn

You'll discover how to build a rock-solid email marketing foundation with proven strategies for choosing the right platform, creating and maintaining a high-quality list, and writing content that lands in inboxes, not spam folders. Learn to test and improve deliverability, warm up your domain properly, and time your campaigns for maximum engagement with B2B and B2C audiences. You'll also explore how to monitor key metrics, boost your domain reputation, and apply advanced best practices to expand your list and stay out of junk folders long-term.

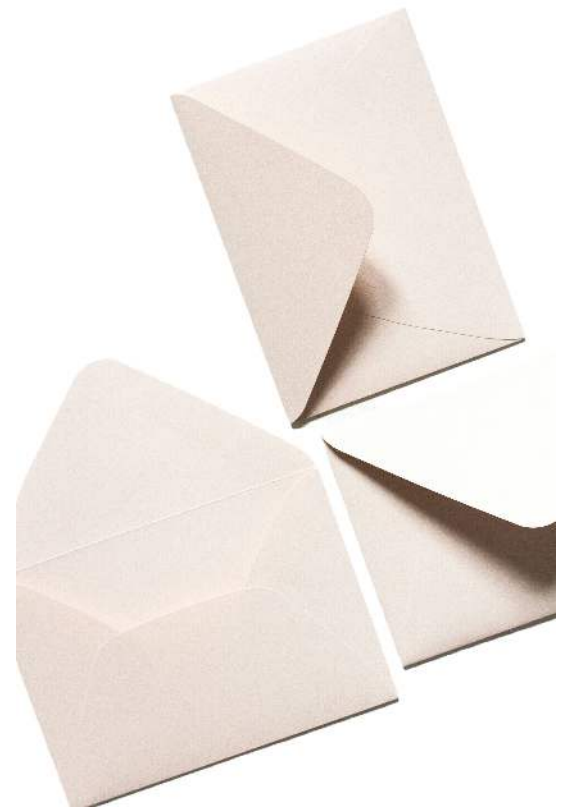


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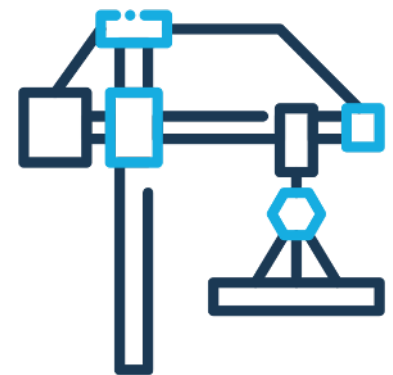
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1. Building a Strong Email Foundation

1.1. Choosing the Right Sending Domain

Your domain name plays a crucial role in email deliverability. Follow these **7 practices** to ensure your domain is optimized for success:

- For **credibility**, use reputable domain extensions like **.com**, **.net**, **.ai**, **.io**, **.co**, or country-specific domains (**.se**, **.de**, **.ca**, **.us**).
- Avoid domains with poor reputations such as **bar**, **.beauty**, **.buzz**, **.cam**, **.casa**, **.cfd**, **.club**, **.date**, **.guru**, **.link**, **.live**, **.monster**, **.online**, **.press**, **.pw**, **.quest**, **.rest**, **.sbs**, **.shop**, **.stream**, **.top**, **.trade**, **.wiki**, **.work**, **.xyz** as they are commonly flagged by spam filters.
- Choose a **provider with fast DNS** services to improve performance.
- Aim for a **domain name with around 10 characters** that includes at least one vowel for better readability.
- When registering a new domain, keep it **brand-focused** and **memorable**, and **avoid numbers** in it.
- Ensure the domain sounds **professional**, **ethical**, and **relevant to your industry**.
- Check its **history** at archive.org to verify it hasn't been misused in the past.



1.2. Setting Up a Professional Mailbox

Your mailbox setup plays a key role in email deliverability. A poorly configured mailbox can accumulate spam points or even be blocklisted. Follow these **4 practices** to optimize your sender reputation:

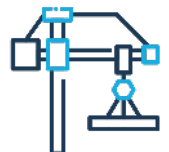
- Use a **reliable** email provider like **Google Workspace** or **Office 365** for better security and deliverability.
- Format your mailbox name professionally. Use **First Name + Last Name** (e.g., jane.doe@yourdomain.com) to enhance credibility. This also ensures consistency when signing off emails (e.g., "Kind regards, Jane").
- Keep mailbox names **short, recognizable, and professional** to improve trust and engagement.
- Avoid using **numbers** in your mailbox name, as they can appear less credible and may trigger spam filters.

1.3. Authenticating Your Sending Domain

Proper domain authentication **helps build trust with mailbox providers**, proving that you own the domain and comply with internet protocols and bulk sender guidelines. Follow these key steps to ensure proper setup:

- Implement **SPF and DKIM** across all your email-sending platforms. Test your setup at [MXToolbox](#) to ensure there are no errors. The most common error in SPF setup is having more than **10 DNS lookups**. Exceeding the 10 DNS lookup limit is a common SPF issue. If you require more than 10 lookups, use SPF flattening tools such as EasySPF or SPF Flattening. But better is limit to 10.
- Set up **DMARC** to enhance security and improve email authentication. Start with **p=none** to monitor email activity, then gradually move to **p=quarantine** or **p=reject** for better deliverability and protection against spoofing.
- Use **subdomains** for different email purposes (e.g., marketing, transactions, support) to separate reputations.
- Regularly check for **blocklisting** using tools like [Multirbl](#).

⚠ Note: Domain authentication can be complex, requiring DNS configuration knowledge. If you need assistance, feel free to reach out.



2. Selecting the Right Email Marketing Platform

Your choice of email **marketing platform can significantly impact deliverability**. A poor platform can cause emails to land in spam, while a well-optimized one helps ensure inbox placement. Follow these best practices when selecting a provider.

- **Test inbox placement** for different audiences:
 - B2C: **Ensure emails land in the inbox** for Gmail, Outlook, and Yahoo users.
 - B2B: **Verify inbox placement** for Google Workspace and Office 365 recipients.
- Check the **platform's IP reputation score**—it should be above 95 to avoid spam filtering.
- Choose a provider, .e.g [MailerLite](#) that supports **custom tracking domains** to maintain brand consistency and avoid shared tracking issues.
- Use tools like [GlockApps](#) to test **inbox vs. spam placement** before sending large campaigns.



3. Building & Maintaining a High-Quality Email List

A **high-quality email list** is one of the most critical factors affecting your sender reputation and deliverability. Follow these best practices to ensure your list remains **clean, engaged, and effective**:

- Use **opt-in, permission-based** methods to collect contacts and avoid spam complaints.
- **Clean email lists** with validation tools like [ZeroBounce](#) to remove invalid or risky addresses.
- **Segment your audience** based on engagement levels and **send campaigns to highly engaged recipients more frequently** to maintain a strong inbox reputation.
- **Allow targeted unsubscribes** by letting recipients opt out of specific campaign types rather than all emails.
- **Suppress unengaged contacts** who haven't interacted in **5-6 months** to prevent deliverability issues.
- Run re-subscription campaigns before suppressing inactive contacts, **giving them a chance to re-engage**.



4. Crafting Email Content That Reaches the Inbox

The quality of your email content is crucial for **three key reasons**:

- ✓ Avoiding spam filters and bounces
- ✓ Ensuring successful inbox delivery
- ✓ Engaging your recipients effectively and building a good reputation.

👣 Follow these best practices to **optimize your emails and maintain a strong sender reputation**.

4.1. Optimizing for Spam Filters

4.1.1. Be mindful of links:

- Avoid **third-party** links unless tested and proven to deliver successfully.
- Do not use "**https://**" or "**http://**" in the visible copy—write links as "yourwebsite.com/landingpage" instead.
- Refrain from using **URL shorteners** (e.g., bit.ly, tinyurl), as they are often flagged as phishing attempts.

4.1.2. Use clean and professional language:

- Avoid common **spam trigger words** (e.g., Free, Urgent, Limited offer, 100% guarantee, Act now, Earn cash fast, Risk-free, Congratulations, Click here, Call now).
- Do not use **Dear** without a personalized first-name tag (**FNAME**). And avoid FNAME tags if the recipient's email address **lacks a first name**.

4.1.3. Ensure proper formatting:

- Avoid excessive **capitalization** in your content.
- Maintain a balanced **text-to-image ratio** (at least **60% text**).
- Keep **image sizes** below **100KB** per image and include ALT tags.
- Provide at least **500 characters** of text per image used.



4.1.4. Enhance deliverability and rendering:

- Always include a **sender's name in the footer** (e.g., Kind regards, Jane Tree).
- **Optimize for mobile devices** to signal to filters that your message is user-friendly.
- Test how your email appears across different platforms using tools like **Litmus** or **Email on Acid**.
- Validate your **HTML code** using validator.w3.org to ensure clean formatting.

By following these guidelines, you'll improve inbox placement and engagement while avoiding common spam triggers.

4.2. Creating Engaging Email Copy

Crafting compelling email copy is another key to **increasing engagement and inbox placement**. Follow these best practices to ensure your emails capture attention and drive action.

4.2.1. Encouraging Engagement & Action

- **Ask open-ended questions** to encourage replies.
- Include a **clear and singular call-to-action (CTA)** to avoid confusion.
- **Make CTAs stand out**—buttons work better than links.
- **Offer a clear next step**, e.g., "Let me know if you'd like to discuss this further!"



4.2.2. Email Design & Formatting

- **Test email rendering** on multiple devices and email clients to ensure consistency.
- **Add your brand logo** to every email for recognition and credibility.
- **Use bullet points** and bold text to highlight key takeaways.
- **Keep the layout simple and clean**—avoid excessive colors or fonts.
- **Test your email in dark mode**, as some designs break in this setting.

4.2.3. Content That Builds Relationships

- **Engage authentically** by telling stories, delivering value, and addressing recipients' pain points.
- Ensure your **content solves** your customers' and prospects' real **problems**.
- **Rotate and refresh** your messaging **regularly** to avoid repetition.
- **Leverage past content** with high engagement (opens, clicks) for better deliverability.

4.2.4. Crafting Well-Written Messages

- **Tone:** Keep it conversational and relatable—emails should feel like a 1-on-1 message.
- **Clarity:** Make messages concise, clear, and easy to understand.
- **Grammar & Formatting:** Use proper grammar and punctuation and a clean, organized layout.
- **Accuracy:** Double-check all links, attachments, and information for correctness.

4.2.5. Bulk Sending Best Practices

- Always include an **unsubscribe link** in the footer.
- Ask subscribers to **whitelist your email** by adding you to their contacts.

By following these principles, you'll create emails that resonate, engage, and convert.



4.3. Creating an Engaging Subject Line

Your **subject line plays a crucial role** in determining whether your email gets opened. Follow these best practices to craft compelling subject lines:

- **Ensure relevance:** Avoid **misleading** tactics and keep your subject line aligned with your email content.
- **Avoid generic intros** like “I hope you’re well”—instead, start with something engaging.
- **Maintain consistency:** Include at least two words from your email body in the subject line.
- **Make it compelling:** Ask yourself: Would I open this email? If not, refine it.
- Use subject line testing tools like [SendCheckIt](#) to improve engagement.
- **Experiment strategically:** Try adding first names or question marks, especially for re-engagement campaigns.
- **Keep it concise:** Stay under **50 characters** for mobile-friendliness, ideally **5–10 words**.
- Create curiosity, urgency, or value—but **avoid clickbait**.
- **Indicate urgency professionally** if the message is time-sensitive.
- To avoid spam triggers, Skip **ALL CAPS**, **excessive punctuation (!!!)**, and **overly promotional words (FREE, URGENT OFFER)**.



5. Testing deliverability

💡 To ensure successful email campaigns, regularly test your deliverability.

5.1. Analyze your audience's email providers:

- For B2C audiences, check the **distribution** of email providers (e.g., 60% Gmail, 20% Yahoo, 10% Outlook, 10% others).
- In B2B, older professionals tend to use Office 365, while younger professionals often prefer Google Workspace.

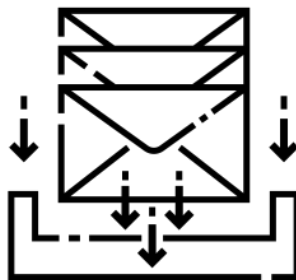
5.2. Test email deliverability across providers:

- Send test emails to **different email services** to see how they perform.
- Create your own test mailboxes or use advanced tools like [GlockApps](#) for deeper insights.

5.3. Aim for high inbox placement:

- **Strive for 70-80% inbox delivery** to maximize engagement.
 - **Example:** If 100% of your audience uses Gmail, but only 70% of your emails land in the inbox, you're still in the game.

5.4. Ensure all links work properly before sending your campaign.



6. Warming Up Your Sending Domain

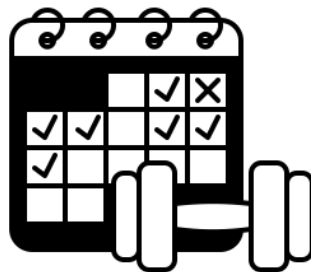
You need a **gradual warm-up process** if you have over 1,000 email addresses and haven't emailed them in the past **five months**. Warming up your domain builds trust with email service providers (ESPs) and your audience. Sending high volumes inconsistently **without proper warm-up can harm your domain's reputation**.

6.1. Pre-Warmup Checklist

- Ensure your domain is at least **31 days** old before sending bulk campaigns. Check: whois.domaintools.com
- **Prepare your warm-up email copy**—it should be **persuasive** but not overly sales-oriented.
- Begin with **recently engaged contacts** (if available) and **expand gradually**.

6.2. Warmup Strategy

- Start by **gradually** increasing email volume rather than sending large campaigns immediately.
- Begin with **250 opt-in and/or business-connected contacts** and **double** the volume each day.
 - **Day 1:** 250 emails
 - **Day 2:** 500 emails
 - **Day 3:** 1,000 emails
- Maintain a steady sending pattern—**avoid sudden spikes**.
- **Monitor deliverability during warm-up** using tools like [Google Postmaster](#) and [GlockApps](#).



6.3. Cold Outreach Warmup

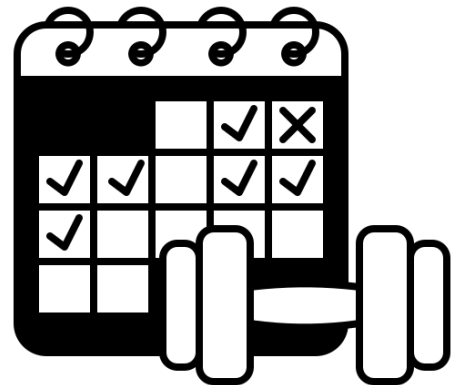
- Start with **50 emails per day** when warming up for cold outreach.
- Do not use your primary domain for cold outreach—**use a subdomain or alternative domain** instead.
- Never send emails to contacts unrelated to your business niche—**your list should be highly targeted**.

6.4. Additional Warmup Best Practices

- Gradual list growth improves deliverability—**avoid sudden increases in sending volume**.
- **ESPs track recipient interactions** with previous campaigns to **determine trust and relevance**.

⚠ Note: For scaling cold outreach, check out the [Email Deliverability Cold Outreach Blueprint](#) for tips like:

- Building a sending reputation with tools like [Instantly.ai](#) before launching campaigns.
- Keeping cold outreach volume under **51** emails per mailbox per day.
- Using a maximum of **three** mailboxes for outreach.



7. Selecting the Best Time to Send Campaigns to B2B and B2C Audiences

Timing plays a crucial role in email engagement. Here are the best practices for scheduling your campaigns:

7.1. B2B Email Timing

- Best time to send: **8 AM – 3 PM** (during work hours).
- Best days to send: **Tuesday to Thursday** for higher engagement.
- **Avoid Mondays and Fridays:**
 - Monday: Mailboxes are overloaded from the weekend.
 - Friday: People are winding down and less responsive.

Consider time zones: If your audience is spread across different regions (e.g., Australia & USA), segment and send campaigns separately to match their local working hours.

7.2. B2C Email Timing

- Best times to send:
 - Morning routine: **6 AM – 9 AM**
 - Lunch break: **12 PM – 2 PM**
 - Evening wind-down: **6 PM – 9 PM**
- Best days to send: **Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday.**
- Weekends can work well since people are more relaxed and have time to check emails.

💡 Pro Tip - If targeting B2B, aim for morning sends (before noon).

💡 Pro Tip - If targeting B2C, schedule afternoon or evening sends (after 4–5 PM)

💡 Pro Tip - You can improve open rates and engagement by aligning your email campaigns with your audience's daily routines.



8. Monitoring Deliverability Metrics

Tracking your deliverability KPIs weekly **helps detect issues early and identify areas for improvement**. Below are the key performance indicators (KPIs) and their recommended thresholds.

Key Deliverability KPIs & Thresholds

- Open Rate:
 - B2C: **25–30%**
 - B2B: **30–40%**
- Click-to-Open Rate (CTOR): **Minimum 2–3%**
- Unsubscribe Rate: **Keep below 0.5–1%**
- Abuse/Spam Rate: **Keep below 0.3–0.5%**
- Bounce Rate: **Keep below 2–5%**
 - Avoid sending to hard bounces.
 - Soft bounces are okay if the recipient has previously opened an email within the **last five months**.
- Inbox Placement Rate: **At least 70% inbox** (Monitor via [GlockApps](#) or similar tools)
- Domain Reputation: Should be **Medium** or **High**.
 - If sending 500+ emails per B2C campaign, check reputation via [Google Postmaster](#).
- Domain Blocklists: Ensure your domain is not blocklisted. Check via [MultiRBL](#).



Key Considerations

⚠ A low domain reputation doesn't mean all emails go to spam. Loyal subscribers (**those who reply, mark emails as important, or engage regularly**) are more likely to receive your emails in their inbox.

⚠ **Some industries face stricter spam filters.** Sectors like gambling, security software, and medicine may have lower average open rates **but still maintain high domain reputation** if inbox placement is strong.

⚠️ **Bot opens & clicks can distort your data.** Email security tools (e.g., Mail Privacy Protection (MPP) for B2C, Safe Links, TAP, Barracuda, TrendMicro for B2B) generate artificial opens and clicks.

💡 Tip - To track bot clicks, hide a unique URL parameter in an image link (e.g., <https://yourwebsite.com/landingpage/?internal=dec02>). Subtract bot clicks from total clicks for a more accurate CTR.

💡 Tip - Focus on open rates of 25–40% (higher than pre-bot standards) to adjust for bot activity.

👛 **Need expert monitoring?** [Forsenders.com](https://forsenders.com) can help track deliverability KPIs and alert you when adjustments are needed.

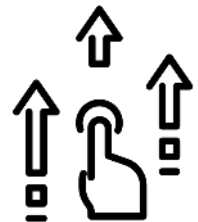


9. Improving Domain Reputation & Avoiding Spam Folders

Maintaining a **strong domain reputation is crucial for email deliverability**. If your reputation drops, follow these best practices:

7.1. Segment & Send to Engaged Contacts

- **Prioritize recipients** who regularly open, click, or reply to your emails.
- **Reduce sending volume to inactive users** until your reputation improves.

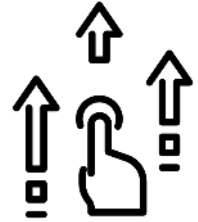


7.2. Review Email Content for Issues

- Avoid **problematic links, excessive promotions, or spammy language**.
- Check for hidden triggers (e.g., **third-party links, affiliate copy, phone numbers**) that spam filters may flag.
- If results are poor, ensure your message doesn't contain flagged terms (even unintentionally).

7.3. Strengthen Your Sending Infrastructure

- **Monitor IP reputation** via Google Postmaster.
- **Verify sender authentication settings** (SPF, DKIM, DMARC) using [Mail-Tester](#).



7.4. Maintain a Consistent Sending Schedule

- Avoid sudden spikes in email volume—gradually increase instead.

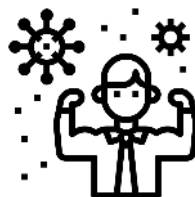
By following these strategies, you can recover and maintain a strong domain reputation, ensuring your emails land in inboxes rather than spam folders.

10. Expanding & Sustaining a Healthy Email List

A **strong, engaged email list** is essential for **long-term deliverability and campaign success**. Follow these best practices:

- **Continuously Grow Your List** - Use sign-up forms, lead magnets, paid ads, and referrals to attract new subscribers.
- **Re-engage Inactive Subscribers** - Target subscribers who haven't opened an email with special offers or surveys in **2–3 months**.
- **Suppress Unengaged Contacts** - To protect deliverability, remove contacts who haven't engaged in **5–6 months** and avoid using them for future campaigns under your main brand.
- **Prevent List Decay** - Maintain opt-in incentives and keep subscribers engaged with valuable, relevant content. Email lists naturally shrink by 20–30% per year due to job changes, loss of interest, and deactivated email accounts—consistent list-building efforts help offset this.

By following these strategies, you can ensure your email list remains active, engaged, and deliverability-friendly.



11. Additional Best Practices to get out of junk

If your emails are landing in spam, follow these steps to diagnose and resolve the issue:

- **9.1. Identify Content Triggers** - Analyze your email content to detect possible spam triggers, such as:
 - Phone numbers, alt tags, street addresses, specific phrases, or third-party links
 - Any unique elements that spam filters may flag
- **9.2. Check Your Sending Reputation** - Ask your email provider to confirm that your IP and domain reputation are rated as:
 - High or Medium (Google Postmaster)
 - Green or Yellow (Microsoft SNDS)
- **Request a Better IP Address** - If spam issues are linked to a specific email provider (not your domain or content), ask your email-sending platform to move you to a higher-reputation IP address.
- **Consider Changing Your Email-Sending Platform** - If issues persist, migrating to a more reliable email service provider (ESP) may improve deliverability.
- **Test a New Subdomain or Domain** - Set up a new subdomain or domain and test deliverability. If results improve, gradually warm up the new domain before scaling campaigns.
- **Monitor for Bot Activity** - Identify potential bot-generated opens and clicks (common in B2B due to Safe Links & MPP protections).
- **Implement BIMi for Brand Trust** - Set up Brand Indicators for Message Identification (BIMI) to increase trust and inbox visibility.
- **Encourage Engagement** - Ask recipients to whitelist your email and reply to your messages—this boosts sender reputation.

By applying these strategies, you can improve inbox placement and reduce spam filtering risks.



Final Thoughts



Mastering email deliverability isn't just about sending emails—it's about **building trust with email providers and recipients alike**. By following the best practices in this blueprint, you'll ensure that your emails land where they belong: **in the inbox**.

Remember, **consistency is key**. Monitor your performance, refine your strategy, and stay up to date with industry changes. If you ever need expert guidance, ForSenders.com experts are here to help.

Not following the tips in this blueprint will affect your campaign engagement, resulting in more spam points, slower link load speeds, lower open and click rate volumes, blocked emails, and reduced reliability.

Thanks for being proactive about your email deliverability!

See you in chat!

Kind regards,
Aleksandrs Vilums
Email Deliverability and Marketing Expert
FORSENDERS.COM