



Data is at the heart of deliverability

Introduction

Following an in-depth project by Adestra into deliverability in the UK a common theme has emerged. **Your data management lies at the heart of your email marketing.**

This briefing shows you how ISPs want you to manage your data. Adopting these recommendations will allow you to benefit from optimum deliverability.

At present, the EU legislation provides different guidelines on what permissions are required for both B2B and B2C. Many organisations face a challenge. Although they promote purely B2B or B2C products, their email databases contain a mixture of work emails and web mail addresses. This document highlights the 'ideal' solutions suggested for focusing on the stricter sector, B2C, allowing you to satisfy the criteria for both.

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What is the link between data and deliverability?

Getting your emails into the inbox (high deliverability) rather than into the junk items folder depends on a good sender reputation amongst other factors.

A good sender reputation is primarily influenced by whether your recipients have complained about your previous email campaigns. They can complain via three main routes:

1. **Your Unsubscribe Links:** telling you they do not want to receive your email. High unsubscribe rates prevent you being able to join accreditation schemes.
2. **The mark as spam/unsafe button:** recipients that use these buttons notify ISPs (like Hotmail and AOL) that they believe your email is spam. High complaint rates lead to blocking by ISPs
3. **Black lists:** more technical users can complain to black list organisations.

Excessive complaint rates will damage your sender reputation, your deliverability rates and ultimately your campaign performance.

Keeping these complaints down simply relates to how relevant and well received your email communications actually are. Without data, it is very difficult to be relevant.

When managing a database, you must think about:

1. **Data Capture**
2. **Data Management**
3. **Data Driven Campaigns**

This whitepaper provides a check list of what ISPs recommend in each section.

Deliverability in the news

There are a number of examples where bad deliverability has derailed a company's activity:

The National Magazine Company

NatMag's Jellyfish Magazine

Deliverability problems ruined a new product launch

NatMag's Jellyfish magazine was a digital magazine originally aimed at teenage girls (11 – 19). The digital magazine was pulled after a 20 week trial period creating much industry speculation about the effectiveness of digital magazines as a medium.

The magazine was delivered by email and suffered delivery problems with Hotmail. Hotmail's spam filters were blocking Jellyfish, even when it was requested by users. It is one of the most high profile examples where deliverability has directly affected the commercial success of a product.

For more information on this story please visit: <http://www.brandrepublic.com/News/732568/Marketing-distribution-troubles-led-Jellyfish-flop/>

e-consultancy

eConsultancy

Unnamed retailer caused customer discontent, as order confirmations are blocked

Over 2,000 of the retailers 30,000 registered users used Hotmail. This meant that when blocked, 7% of their database could not be reached via email. No order confirmations, no marketing, no customer service messages no nothing. The reason for this was an excessive complaint rate where Hotmail users had used the mark as spam button. In effect, a handful of users had brought this ban on all Hotmail users, probably without realising it.

For more information on this story please visit: <http://www.e-consultancy.com/forum/102841-an-e-mail-deliverability-story-msn-hotmail-and-bonded-sender.html?keywords=deliverability+hotmail>

1. Data Capture

Make the consent process memorable & make it obvious what they will receive

Simply be transparent and honest. On your sign up forms, link to your privacy policies and to a sample of your email newsletter. List any brands from which they may receive mail. This will help the recipients recognise your mail.

If subscribers are permitting their data to be shared with third parties be sure to provide information about the nature of the information that is to be shared and the conditions for how third parties are allowed to use the data.

Attach links to sample emails or to privacy policies in a location that a typical subscriber would be sure to see it rather than in places where viewers may not reach like near the submit button in a web sign up form rather than in an area of text that they need to scroll down to see.

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Use confirmed (closed loop) double opt in

ISPs encourage you to use confirmed (closed loop) double opt in. Confirmed (closed loop) opt-ins ensure that people also receive a confirmation email following an opt in request. It notifies them that some action is necessary before their email address will be added to the list. The person must respond or take other equivalent action to be considered confirmed.

Fig 1: www.presentsformen.co.uk

Fig 2: Email to subscriber

Email requested on site

Email asks them to confirm that they requested the email

This leads to lower recipient complaint rates and is one of the criteria for a number of industry white lists.

With confirmed email, you have a unique opportunity to make a contact search for an email you have sent them. As part of this you can ask them to add you to their safe senders

It also means that there is no way that 'spam trap' addresses can end up on your list. Spam trap addresses are used by blacklisting organisations to find companies that are harvesting email addresses off the internet. These are important factors when building a positive sender reputation, which will aid you when trying to get emails delivered into the inbox of the major UK based web mail ISPs.

There are also additional marketing benefits in that your email addresses are more responsive.

How much more responsive are double opt in names?

In practice: double opt in names are more responsive than single opt in names:

Metric	Single opt in	Double Opt in	Percentage uplift
Open rate	17%	22%	+ 30%
Click through rate	5.4%	5.5%	+ 2%
Conversion rate	0.5%	0.6%	+ 20%

Based on an aggregation of Adestra client results

This does not mean you should never contact all your other non double-opt in names. After all, all names captured off line or through a call centre would be useless! **Names captured in other ways are not useless.** Simply flag them on your database as either direct or indirect consent:

- **Direct:** a person has requested to be included on a company or communication-specific list.
- **Indirect:** a person has requested to be included on a list that is not company or communication-specific, such as with affiliate program, list rentals or other third parties. When using indirect opt-in consent, look to upgrade indirect to direct opt-in consent as soon as possible.

This segmentation will allow you to treat the lists differently.

2. Data Management

ISPs encourage you to follow some simple rules:

Store information about the sign up

To quickly resolve any queries or complaints that come up, record the IP address, date, and time of the initial consent and/or the level of permission granted at subscription.

Suppress people

Ensure that bounced email addresses, those who complain and unsubscribers are suppressed. The main UK based ESPs like Adestra have feedback loops in place for the major ISPs to receive all people who complain and automatically suppress them on your behalf.

3. Data Driven Campaigns

Targeted, relevant email campaigns drive the best results. Forrester Research shows that this approach can generate nine times the response of untargeted promotions. They also have the lowest complaint rates. So, following the direct marketing mantra of “*right message, to the right people at the right time*” has never been truer.

Ensure brand recognition

Use consistent from name and addresses. This enhances the subscriber's ability to recognise your brand and messages. This also reduces the risks of subscribers being fooled and your brand damaged if you suffer a phishing attack. If it is a third party using the names, ensure there is a footer explaining why they are receiving the message and how they can end ongoing messages

Be as relevant as possible

Segment your data and ensure your messages are as relevant as possible to those contacts. Avoid sending communications to your contacts unless you have something worth while to say. Do not use misleading or ‘cryptic’ subject lines- a good subject line acts as both a filter and a marketing device.

Design for easy opt outs

Display unsubscribe instructions prominently to reduce people using the ‘mark as spam’ button.

Data is not static so keep cleaning

Offer your contacts the chance to clean their details. Remember that data capture is only the first stage of your email relationship with recipients. To this end, a continued, regular dialogue with contacts, providing clear instructions on how to update their preferences are a must to ensure a long term profitable relationship.



About Adestra

Adestra is an email marketing agency with one aim - to be the email marketers' first choice partner.

Working with multinationals through to small business, Adestra's unrivalled market reputation, has been established through first class customer service and a track record of working with clients to ensure they get results. We provide self service email marketing tools and managed email marketing broadcast services for over well 2,000 UK based organisations. For more information, please contact moreinfo@adestra.com, call 01865 24 24 25 or visit www.adestra.co.uk