

## Five Tips for Better Holiday Email Delivery Rates

Is your email program ready for the holidays? As you may know, economic uncertainty means many U.S. retailers are starting their holiday marketing efforts earlier this year than ever before. So now that the face paint has just been washed off and the sugar high has barely started to subside from Halloween, the holiday shopping frenzy will begin. To optimize deliverability, response rates, reputation, and sales during the holiday season, we've put together five tips to optimize your holiday email delivery rates.

**TIP ONE:** Increase relevance. ISPs keep score of your digital reputation as a sender, and relevance is the key to building and maintaining a good sending reputation. Relevant email will keep your spam complaints down, which is a high priority with the ISPs, each of whom have their own individual thresholds for what they consider to be an "acceptable" number of spam complaints. Once those thresholds are breached, the ISPs make a decision to block or filter your mail.

How do you help increase relevance, thereby decreasing spam complaints? Target your holiday offers. Leverage what you know about subscribers to offer them content that will capture their attention and drive them to your website to make a purchase.

**TIP TWO:** Keep unknown users and spam traps out. The ISPs aren't looking only at spam complaint levels. They also want to see that your email address acquisition process (how you are collecting the addresses in your list) keeps your lists clean of dead/discontinued addresses and spam traps. The percentage of dead email addresses that you mail to is referred to as the "unknown user" rate. If someone has changed email addresses, make sure that they have a way to provide you with updated information via an email preference center.

Failure to keep your list free of dead addresses could also put you at higher risk for spam traps. Some ISPs and blacklists are known to reactivate dead addresses and use them as spam traps. They feel this is an effective way to quickly identify senders who aren't conducting good list hygiene. If your email acquisition process allows one or more of these traps into your list(s), it can quickly lead to delivery issues. By implementing a closed-loop, double opt-in process to your email program, you will quickly mitigate the risk of these probes poisoning your database.

**TIP THREE:** Scrub your list. “Scrub” your list of junk addresses, known dead domains, addresses with no MX Record, and known spam traps. This will ensure that when you are ready to send out your holiday email marketing campaigns, you are mailing to the cleanest list(s) possible.

**TIP FOUR:** Switch to a dedicated IP address. Generating mail from a shared range of IP addresses puts you at risk if another sender fails to follow ethical sending practices. Moving your account to a dedicated IP address allows all parties involved—you, the ISPs, and us—clear visibility into your deliverability, untainted by the conduct of other senders. This is a best practice that will help optimize your holiday email delivery and it has quickly become an industry standard.

**TIP FIVE:** Get into the address book. Getting your subscribers to add your “from” address to their address book can really help increase the probability that your mail will be directed appropriately to their inbox. Make sure there is a clear call to action in every email campaign you send that asks subscribers to add your “from” email address to their safe senders list or address book.

**Reach out to your account rep to find out more.**