

Email Marketing Best Practices

Email Deliverability Handbook



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Sender reputation: The keystone to your campaigns

The most fundamental rule of email marketing is that you need a great sender reputation to communicate to your contacts via email. Maintaining your sender reputation is as simple as using the best practices of email marketing, like keeping your email free of high-risk contacts. If you employ only some of these methods, your practices will not produce the stellar reputation you need to maintain great deliverability to your contacts. It takes a full commitment to these practices to build trust with your recipients. The good news is that this foundation of trust pays off for your business in many more ways than just email deliverability.

Best lead generation practices

Explicit permission

- ✓ On web forms, use a check box defaulted to unchecked to allow contacts to choose to agree to marketing.
- ✓ Through personal interaction like at an event, over the phone, or direct contact via social media, be sure to ask explicitly if you can send ongoing marketing emails to the address they shared with you.

Permission is only explicit when it is voluntary.

This means if you force or coerce contacts to give you permission for them to receive some discount, special access, or even to create an account, they may agree even though they don't want to receive marketing emails. Unwanted emails are inevitably marked as spam.

Additionally, gathering contact information from an association, affiliates, joint venture partner, or purchasing addresses through a list provider are all invalid opt-in sources and should not be used to generate leads. Using these other opt-in sources is a fundamentally poor practice because there is no opportunity for the contact to give you explicit permission. It is a violation of Keap's AUP and some laws to send email to contacts without explicit permission.

Double opt-in

After you've gained explicit permission at the time of opt-in, confirm your contact's email address by sending a double opt-in link. Upgrading your contact's opt-in status to "confirmed" helps you identify falsely entered or mistyped addresses, increases deliverability, and confirms that the contact is definitely interested in your business. **Contacts who double opt-in are the hottest leads.**

Setting expectations

Contacts will often mark unexpected emails as spam. Set expectations for the recipient about your emails in regards to what, when, how often, and from whom. If you aren't explicit, recipients will form their own expectations: They might assume that an "occasional newsletter" will come once a month, when you plan to send it once a week. Contacts are likely to assume that the emails will be sent from the website they signed up on, so if that differs, be sure to let them know.

When
contacts
opt-in,
clearly state:

- ✓ What content you will be sending
- ✓ How often you will send it
- ✓ The identity of the sender

Best sending practices

Meeting expectations

In order to meet the expectations of your recipients, send only the content they requested at the frequency they requested. Make sure they will recognize the address that you send from, and that the logos and branding in your emails match those that they've seen when they signed up. Be consistent with your content, frequency, sending address, and branding. Don't suddenly change to unrelated content, forget to send one week on a weekly newsletter, or send from different addresses each time. If you intend to make a change, you should notify the recipients. In addition, provide contacts with an opportunity to opt-in again if you make changes in content or frequency.

Segmenting

If you have different types of content or offer emails on different frequencies, segment your contacts accordingly so that they only receive what they asked for. You can always give them the opportunity to opt-in for additional content if you think they might be interested.

Subject Lines

Don't be tempted to think of catchy subject lines to get recipients to open your emails. Describe clearly and directly what you are sending. People have developed an amazing ability to spot spam based on the subject line alone and will flag an email as spam without even opening it.

- ✓ Only use subject lines that are specific and relevant to your content
- ✓ Avoid anything deceiving or misleading, such as "RE:" or "FW:"
- ✓ Avoid vague phrases like "What's up?" or "A quick reminder".
- ✓ Avoid spam-related words like "FREE" or including monetary amounts like "Earn \$500 Today".

Whitelisting

Ask your contacts to add you to their address book or safe sender list to prevent their spam filter from accidentally blocking your email.

Unsubscribing

Make it easy to unsubscribe. All automated email messages sent from your Keap application contain a default unsubscribe link. Don't add multiple blank lines before the opt-out link (AKA padding) or obscure the link in any way. Doing so leaves people frustrated and with no other option than to mark your email as spam.

Legal concerns

Know and obey all email-related laws like the [CAN-SPAM Act](#) and [CASL](#). Be aware that sending email is an international action: You don't always know what country your recipient resides in and you **MUST** obey the laws of that country. For this reason, all Keap customers are required to be compliant with email-related laws. In addition to serious legal consequences, emails that don't comply are a red flag for recipients and can hurt your sender reputation.

Objectionable content

Avoid sending any content that could be considered objectionable or vulgar. Even if your contacts have agreed to receive this type of content, their spam filters will likely block your emails. Be conservative about the content you send, and consider hosting questionable content on your website and sending a link to that content instead.

Email list hygiene: removing high-risk contacts

To maintain list hygiene, you should remove high-risk contacts every month. Your Keap application automatically changes the status of hard bounces, unsubscribes, and complaints to "non-marketable", but there are other types of contacts you should remove on a regular basis.

Role accounts

Contacts with email addresses such as “info@” or “admin@”: These addresses are typically shared among multiple employees in a business, or transferred from one person to another and therefore present a risk of generating spam complaints. If a contact signs up with a role account, ask him or her for another address to send marketing to, and remove any role accounts that don't respond to your request.

Unengaged contacts

If a person has not opened an email or clicked a link in awhile, it's likely that they are no longer interested and are a high risk for spam complaints. Not only that, but major Email Inbox Providers (EIPs) will also identify that the recipient is unengaged and can move your emails to the junk folder or block them completely. To decide what constitutes engagement, keep in mind the frequency with which you are sending. A contact that has not engaged in the last month with your daily emails is considered much less engaged than if you were sending monthly emails. **Regardless of frequency, any contact that has not opened or clicked in the past 4 months should be considered unengaged and removed from your marketable list.**

Re-engagement

To prevent contacts from dis-engaging, consider sending a special coupon or promotion to regain their interest. You can also ask the contact directly if they wish to continue to receive emails. Don't wait until it's too late—do this **BEFORE** the contact becomes a risk. **Remove any contacts that don't respond to your re-engagement campaign as they pose a high risk to your reputation.**

Cold Contacts

People tend to forget that they signed up for marketing if they don't receive any for a while, and if some shows up out of the blue they are likely to mark it as spam. **Permission to send marketing is not permanent; it actually degrades over time if you don't maintain a relationship.** Any contacts that have not been emailed in over 4 months are considered “cold contacts”, and should be removed from

your marketable list. There are plenty of other people out there that are interested in your business, and with your new best practices, you'll reach the best prospects and build a great reputation doing it.

Best practices: A philosophy of marketing

In essence, maintaining a great reputation is about honesty and transparency, which in turn builds trust. When designing any of your marketing systems and automation, ask yourself: "Is this deceiving in any way? Is this completely clear and honest? Is there any way this could be interpreted differently, or misunderstood?" If your methods pass this self-test, you are on your way to building an excellent reputation and trust as a sender.

Maintaining a great reputation is about honesty and transparency.