



HOW SPAM COMPLAINTS IMPACT YOUR EMAIL REPUTATION

 **EMAIL DELIVERED**

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HOW SPAM COMPLAINTS IMPACT YOUR EMAIL REPUTATION

Spam complaints play a big role in your email reputation, deliverability rates, and overall success of your email program.

NOTE: If you're just warming up a new IP address, then it's quite common to see an increase in spam complaints if you've been experiencing email deliverability problems with your previous provider. Chances are these subscribers haven't been receiving your emails for some time and may not remember having signed up for your email program. This can delay your warm up period if complaints are high enough to cause ISP throttling or reputation issues. To help with this, we do have suggestions for maximizing your warm up.

Before we get started... if you are in the "warm up" stage, then it's quite common to have higher complaints because often subscribers hadn't been getting your messages, so they're hearing from you again and may not remember signing up for your email.

So let's take a deeper look at complaints...

WHAT EXACTLY IS A SPAM COMPLAINT?

A spam complaint is when a subscriber hits the “spam” button in their email client. In other words, instead of unsubscribing from your list, they tell the ISP that your message is spam.





HOW IS THE COMPLAINT RATE CALCULATED?

While ISPs have ranges on what they deem an acceptable rate, it ranges from .1% to .3%, with more of them leaning towards the .1% or less.

NOTE: That's NOT 1%. It's 0.1%. (That's 100 complaints per 100,000 emails).

We have seen that the larger the list, the lower the percentage that the ISPs will accept before it impacts your delivery. And with regard to complaints, it's also important to keep in mind that complaints start coming in as soon as you hit send in your email software, so if your email generates a number of complaints right off the bat, you may find that the rest of your email messages are throttled due to the higher complaints.

For example, if only 1000 emails have gone out and you've already had 5 complaints, you can run into trouble.

To calculate your complaint rate, simply divide the number of spam complaints by the number of emails sent. However, perhaps more important, to determine complaints by ISP, divide the number of complaints by ISP by the total number of messages sent to that ISP.

NOTE: Not all ISPs have a formal feedback loop/complaint processing mechanism.

HOW DO COMPLAINTS IMPACT MY REPUTATION?

When a subscriber hits the spam button, this is a negative mark against your reputation. In addition to the straight “numbers”, the ISPs appear to also be looking at spam statistics as they relate to engagement. In other words, if you send to 100,000 people and only 1500 people open your email and 100 people click the spam button, the ISPs can see that you have a very high percentage of those that opened your message are clicking the spam button.

This is also very telling about your message content. It's a good idea to check your spam complaints against your opens as well. If 10% of the people that are opening your emails click on the spam button, then you've definitely got a problem to deal with.

While there are not published statistics on this, we have seen a direct correlation between high spam complaints per OPENS even IF the complaints are within the .1 - .3% acceptable ratios.

In other words, if you send to a lot of subscribers, have low opens, but high complaints, your reputation is impacted more than those with the same number of sends and complaints, but with a higher open rate percentage.



HOW CAN I REDUCE MY COMPLAINTS?

This is “relatively” easy! Here are 7 tips for reducing your complaints.

1. Send only to those people who have opted in to your list and expect to hear from you.
2. Pay attention to the campaigns that generate the highest complaints and stay away from them in the future.
3. Clean your list regularly, purging subscribers that are no longer opening your emails. At the very least, drop them down to a lesser frequency.
4. Send consistently. This is important because (a) subscribers are less likely to forget you if you’re staying in contact with them, (b) complaint percentages increase when volume decreases (in other words, if you sent a message 2 weeks ago, people may still be hitting the spam button, but there are no NEW messages to offset the complaints).
5. Don’t overdo it. Set expectations and stick to what you promised. At the very least, always include a manage subscriptions page too
6. Use a 1 click unsubscribe link with anchor text “Report as Spam” and a manage subscriptions link for general unsubscribes or choosing subscriptions. (NOTE: If you use this strategy, understand that if you have subscribers on multiple lists, they may get mad if you continue to send them messages if they thought they unsubscribed)
7. Make it EASY to unsubscribe. Don’t get creative here. Simply provide a way for people to get off of your list and honor their request. PERIOD.

For over a decade Heather Seitz used email marketing to build successful companies and had to solve the biggest barrier to consistent profitability: deliverability. Today she is the Co-Founder and CEO of Email Delivered.

For more information on how to protect your reputation and email deliverability by preventing spam complaints as much as possible, visit: <http://www.emaildelivered.com/spam-complaints-impact-your-email-reputation/> Remember to sign up for the FREE Email Delivered Pulse newsletter for articles, tips, and recommended resources for email marketers.

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