

# Email Deliverability

---

## Best Practices Guide

---

March 2011





---

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Best Practice #1: Clear and Targeted Opt-In For List Building</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Best Practice #2: Maintain Regular List Hygiene</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Best Practice #3: Honour Unsubscribe Requests</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Best Practice #4: Send Useful Targeted Content</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Best Practice #5: Use Good Subject Lines and Sender From Address</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Best Practice #6: Tune Messaging Frequency</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Best Practice #7: Optimise Layout and Content</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>11</b>

Emailvision is the worldwide leader in on-demand email and social marketing. The Emailvision mission is to provide excellence in technology and services for online relationship marketing. The company is majority-owned by Francisco Partners of California, and is led by the same visionary leaders who founded Emailvision in 1999. With offices in 18 countries, Emailvision delivers 4 billion messages per month on behalf of more than 3,000 clients worldwide. The organisation provides a pioneering technology platform, industry-leading deliverability rates, in-depth relationships with more than 150 global ISPs, and best-in-class client services. Emailvision unprecedented quality of service is driven by 12 years of research and development and by the organisation's 400 passionate employees – who are dedicated to helping customers harness the exceptional potential of email and social marketing.



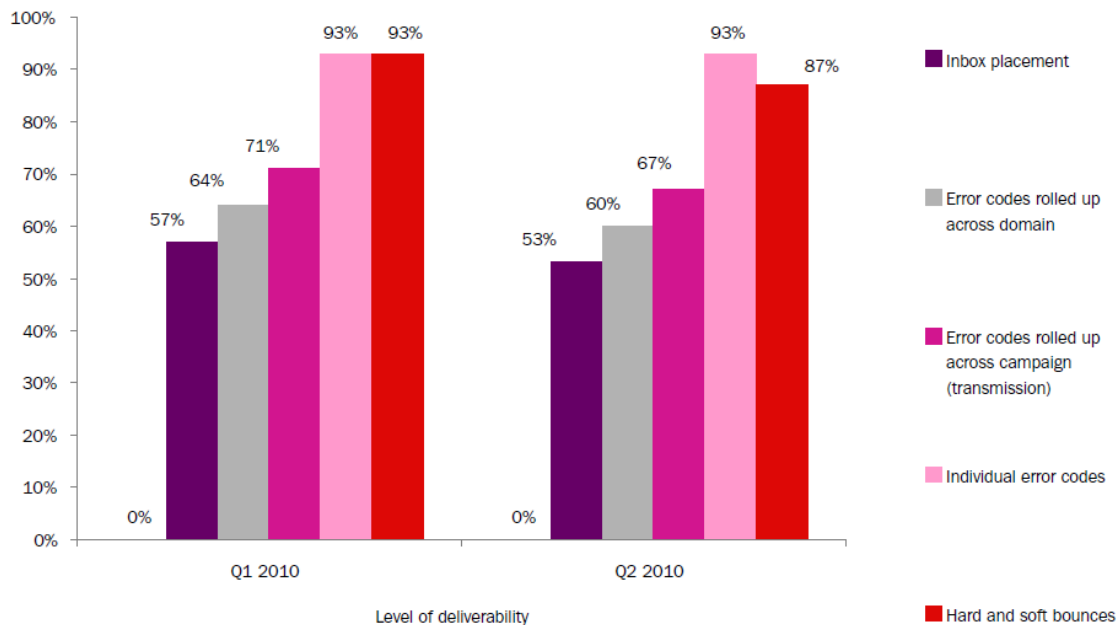
# Introduction

Email marketing is one of the most powerful tools a business can use to generate revenue and build customer loyalty. And there is ample evidence why. According to a 2009 study from the DMA’s Power of Direct economic impact study, email marketing provides an ROI of \$43.62 for every dollar spent on it. What other marketing practice - including advertising or direct mail - can provide a \$44 to \$1 ROI? Not many.

But in order to be a successful email marketer, one must acknowledge the close relationship between deliverability and effective email marketing best practices. In order to improve deliverability, there needs to be a coordinated strategy between the ESP and the email marketer. This paper focuses on the second half of the equation and how the email marketer can improve deliverability by adhering to industry best practices in their own email marketing efforts.

From DMA Email Benchmarking Report 2010 ETC

Chart 25: To what level do you track deliverability?





---

## **Best Practice #1: Clear and Targeted Opt-In For List Building**

---

A key aspect of building a good and clean list is to ensure a clear and targeted opt-in mechanism. Many companies, in their desire to increase the size of the mailing list with minimum effort and minimal compliance, provide a small check box which needs to be clicked to opt-out and by default the person is selected as opt-in. This will result in a large number of undesired email subscriptions. The best practice is to opt-out a subscriber by default and make them take action to opt-in. In addition many companies send a variety of messages that are not targeted to the user's interests, all from a single opt-in subscription. This result is poor response to campaigns and complaints of spam from the end user, resulting in poor deliverability. The best practice is to provide targeted multiple opt-in selections to the end user to ensure they are subscribing only to relevant content.



---

## Best Practice #2: Maintain Regular List Hygiene

---

An unmaintained list over time can cause complaints from the end users resulting in ISP blacklisting. It is essential to routinely clean the list to ensure high levels of deliverability and return on investment. Following the best practices for list hygiene outlined below can enhance deliverability:

- Clean email lists at least once a quarter
- Scan and remove duplicates. This is extremely common in lists. Email Service Providers often have tools to remove duplicates easily
- Remove distribution lists such as sales@company.com or info@company.com from the lists. Sending to distribution lists very often results in unintended people receiving email and is a big source of complaints with the ISPs.
- Clean up misspelled domains from the list. Simple mistakes such as alo.com for aol.com and gmal.com for gmail.com can be easily corrected. Look for bounces from recent campaigns for domains that can be corrected
- Evaluate if inactive users should be deleted. If a person did not open a single email in the last year, probably this person should be deleted from the email and an alternative format should be used for engaging the person.
- Clean “spammy” email addresses. Internet Service Providers often use email addresses with the word “spam” (e.g., spammessage@hotmail.com, 123spam@aol.com, etc.) to catch spammers. It is important to clean all email addresses that have the word spam, weekly. Sending to this email address can very quickly result in blacklisting.



---

## Best Practice #3: Honour Unsubscribe Requests

---

Promptly honouring unsubscribe requests is an important aspect of building a good reputation. The best practice in this area is to provide multiple methods to unsubscribe and promptly unsubscribe any requests. Provide a clearly marked link in the email to unsubscribe and also provide an email address where unsubscribe requests can be sent.

Ensure all requests are acted upon within a day. Email service provider platforms today have tools you can leverage that make unsubscribe requests easy to manage. It is very useful to create a short survey of not more than 3 questions and a comment box in the unsubscribe form. Data collected in the form can be utilised to improve the email marketing lifecycle and programmes for the company.

### Email Preference Center

It's easy to choose how often you'd like to receive emails. You can update your choices at any time.

<p><b>UPDATE EMAIL FREQUENCY:</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Keep my emails coming, I want to make sure I receive your best offers</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Send me an email once a week</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Send me an email once every two weeks, plus holiday reminders</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Send me an email once each month, plus holiday reminders</p> <p><b>▶ UPDATE EMAIL OPTIONS</b></p>	<p><b>UPDATE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS:</b></p> <p>My new address is: <input type="text"/></p> <p><b>▶ UPDATE ADDRESS</b></p>
	<p><b>UNSUBSCRIBE:</b></p> <p>Thanks, but I'd rather not receive your email. Please remove my name from your list.</p> <p><b>▶ UNSUBSCRIBE</b></p>



---

## Best Practice #4: Send Useful Targeted Content

---

Look at email marketing not just from the company's point of view, but from the subscriber point of view. Companies often send generic content to a wide array of users resulting in lack of usefulness which increases complaints. Use segmentation and targeting tools in the email platform to provide useful targeted content. Targeting is of particular importance in B2B email marketing, where subscribers can quickly lose interest if they are getting messages that are not relevant to their business area. Sending irrelevant content is a very quick way of landing in the complaint list of ISPs. According to analysis conducted by Marketing Sherpa, 4 out of 10 subscribers clicked "Mark as Spam" when they received irrelevant content. With the large amount of emails today, people will quickly mark messages as spam if they find the content to be of little use to them.



---

## Best Practice #5: Use Good Subject Lines and Sender From Address

---

In order to improve open rate email marketers often use aggressive subject lines in their messages. This often results in messages being flagged as potential spam by the ISP or an over the top message that is ignored and reported as spam by the email recipient. It is important to run A/B testing of subject lines to see what works for your particular user base.

Use sender addresses that are relevant to the content. Often all email is sent from the same generic email address such as info@company.com. Using relevant email addresses such as newsletter@company.com, orders@company.com and discount@company.com enable the recipient to understand the intent of the email. One of the worst practices is to use a random string of letters and numbers as the sender. This can increase spam complaints and very poor open rates from an impersonal message.



---

## Best Practice #6: Tune Messaging Frequency

---

Email marketers often send either too many or too few emails for their message to be effective. It is important to have the right frequency of relevant touches. When sending out emails from various groups, newsletters, press releases, special offers, etc. email marketers often do not realise the large amount of overlap in email addresses among the different segments, possibly resulting in over-targeting individual recipients. Sending several emails to the same recipient may well result in messages being flagged as spam, thus impacting deliverability.

The good news is that email service providers today offer tools that allow setting limits on the amount of messages an individual can receive in a given period of time. Make sure you set reasonable limits on the number of messages based on your subscriber base.

On the other hand some companies do not have an established email marketing programme and messages are sent months apart. This will result in the recipient becoming disconnected from that company and forgetting they subscribed to the information. They then report the message as spam resulting in deliverability issues. A best practice is for the company to have a minimum of one email touch a month.



---

## Best Practice #7: Optimise Layout and Content

---

It is important to adopt a clean layout and design to improve email deliverability. Spam filters scan through the messages and mark messages with poor code, thus increasing the chances of it being marked as spam and impacting deliverability to the inbox. Spammers and phishers are making their messages look increasingly legitimate, so a message that does not render properly will be flagged as spam by the recipient. Use the best practices below and test messages on various browsers and inbox preview tools of the email service provider platform.

Basic good practices include:

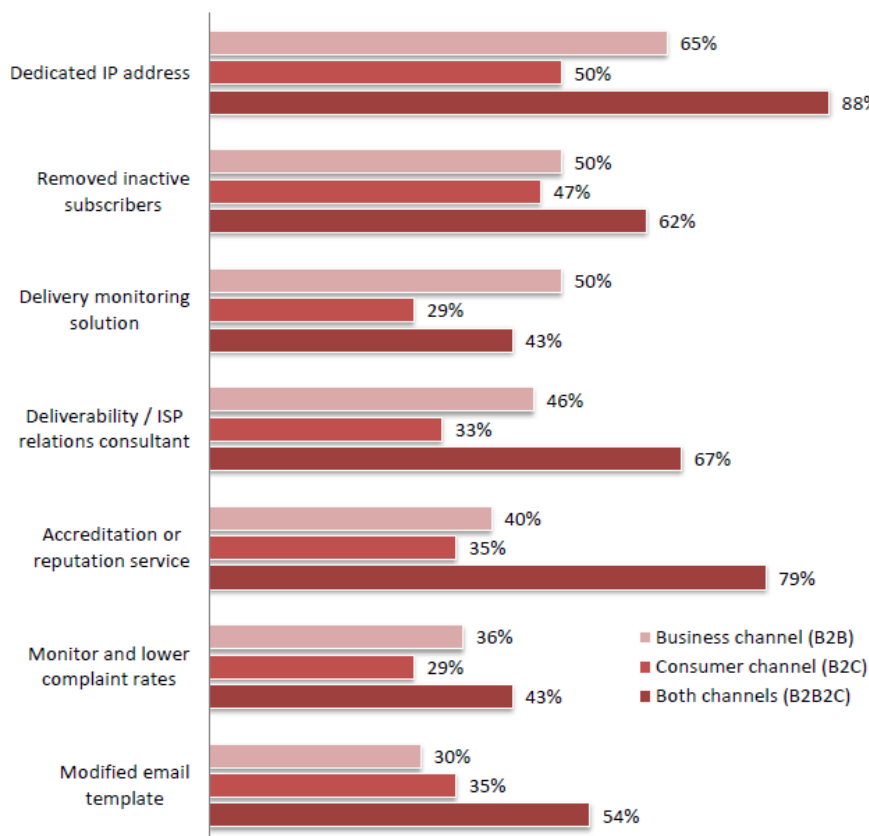
- Set message width to between 500px to 600px
- Never use a single image for the email message
- Use simple HTML (v4.01 or newer) compliant with W3C standards
- Keep the layout simple and utilise HTML tables
- Internal CSS styles within the body tag has the best rendering
- Keep HTML light: ~100Kb (with images), ~15-20Kb without images
- Always send a multi-part message: Text + HTML
- Verify messages with a HTML validation tool and spam checking tool



## Conclusion

While email is one of the most common messaging communication vehicles today and provides the highest ROI for marketing purposes, marketers need to be aware of how they can use it effectively for business purposes. Used properly, your business can prosper. Used incorrectly, your deliverability, IP reputation and business image can suffer. Therefore, it is sensible for the email marketer, once having chosen the email service provider (ESP) they will use, leverage the ESP platform features effectively by following the best practice outlined in this document. Working together, the email service provider and marketer can ensure the emails are consistently reaching inboxes worldwide.

**Chart: Deliverability improvement tactics rated very effective, by primary channel**



Source: MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded Sep 2010, N=1,115



---

## **Emailvision**



www.emailvision.com

---

## **Worldwide locations:**

Argentina	Austria
Belgium	Brazil
Canada	China
France	Germany
Hong Kong	Israel
Italy	Netherlands
Portugal	Scandinavia
Spain	Switzerland
United Kingdom	USA