

# Email Deliverability Leading Practices: Making Sure Your Email Gets Where It's Going

The ability to distribute surveys via email campaigns within Alchemer is one of our most popular features. In order for this powerful feature to continue to meet your needs we continually work to maintain high email deliverability. **Email deliverability** is the rate at which an email sent from Alchemer ends up in your contacts' inboxes.

There are 3 main factors that determine our deliverability:

1. The accuracy and quality of your list of addresses
2. The content of your email and how likely it is to look like spam - even when it isn't
3. The reputation of our IPs

Our email deliverability is the sum of the deliverability rate for each of our customers. This makes us partners in the endeavor to get your email into your contacts' inboxes.

## Your Part

Help us help you! For each spam complaint, that is, each time a contact clicks "this is spam" in their email program, our IP's reputation takes a hit. Similarly, each bounced email also counts as a blow to our IP's reputation. Do your part to reduce spam complaints and bounces by following the below guidelines for maintaining clean lists and creating good content.

## Our Part

We diligently maintain our relationship with large ISPs (Internet Service Providers) that handle emails sent by our customers. We run both automatic and manual tests to halt problematic campaigns from being sent (a health check on a percentage of the contacts). Depending on the size of your contact list, the time it takes for all of your message to send out can vary.

- We run a health check on all campaigns by first sending to a random 5% sample of the list.
- If the bounce rate of this sample is higher than 10%, we will cancel the send and alert the user who created the campaign via email.
  - A 'bounce' occurs when the email address is found to be invalid. These are most commonly either mistyped or non-existent addresses.
- If the bounce rate is below 10%, up to 5,000 messages will send every 30 minutes until all messages are sent.

We will also work with our customers to help with good list management and content revisions.

All of these efforts help us protect deliverability for all customers and ensures as many messages

as possible reach their intended recipients.

## The Golden Rule of Email Deliverability

The golden rule of email deliverability is "quality over quantity." It was not that long ago that the key to successful email campaigns focused on volume and repetition. The more email you sent, the more successful you were. Not anymore! Now the emphasis is on the quality of your list and content. In addition to all of the more technical and tactical guidelines below, keep this strategic principle in mind and you should be golden!

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## Maintaining Clean Lists

Clean lists are permission-based lists.

A permission-based list is a list of contacts who have given you permission to send them emails. Permission is considered to be granted when a contact has asked to be subscribed to a list and an email is sent to confirm the validity of the email. This "double opt-in" process ensures that all contacts have given permission to receive bulk email and that they have provided a valid email address that will not result in bounced messages or SPAM abuse reports.

If you are looking for third-party services that clean lists, you can check out [BriteVerify](#) or [DataValidation](#).

### Reconfirm old lists

Email addresses go stale really fast. A contact should be considered inactive after about 6 months of no sending. Reconfirm that you have permission to send to this contact via a re-opt in process. Send a re-introduction email that is personal in tone and reminds the contact how you originally obtained their contact information and ask them to re-opt in. This re-introduction email should be sent to your contact list in segments from your personal or business email account. Using this up-to-date permission-based list, you can confidently send campaigns with Alchemer again!

### Make updates when you are notified of an email address that has changed

This is essential to maintaining a good list. Emails sent to old addresses are likely to bounce or to be flagged as spam.

### Remove Bounces

Bounced emails should be removed from your lists. Lists with high bounce rates will be suspended for subsequent sends in our system.

### Manage unsubscribes

Alchemer automatically processes unsubscribes for you within your email campaign, preventing reminders from being sent to these contacts. If you are maintaining your list

within our Email List contact management system, these unsubscribes are processed so that your list is ready when you want to run your next campaign without having to manually delete the contacts from a list. To learn more visit our Email List Tutorial.

### **Remove group email addresses such as sales@, info@, test@ and any listserv addresses**

Group/role-based email address inboxes often go unmonitored; this can mean that the email will bounce. In addition, emails sent to group email address are likely to result in spam complaints (sometimes more than one) and it only takes one report as spam to ding the sender IP. As a result, as of May 23, 2016 group email addresses are no longer allowed within Alchemer.

### **Remove duplicate email addresses**

This is just good email etiquette. Duplicate emails will annoy your contacts and result in spam complaints. Sending invites to multiple emails may also skew your results. Because multiple unique links will be sent to the same contact they will be allowed to submit multiple responses to your survey.

### **No purchased/scraped lists**

Both purchased lists and lists of email addresses scraped from the web do not conform to the double opt-in definition of permission. These lists should not be sent from Alchemer.

PLEASE NOTE: *This excludes panels purchased from Panel Management companies which are permitted within Alchemer.*

### **Use a list management system**

Use a list management system so you can track emails sent to your contacts. Alchemer's Contact Management has a message history available for each contact so that you can see what campaigns and messages the contact has recently received. In addition, unsubscribes will be processed and changed to *inactive* for you so you're all set for your next campaign. To learn more visit our Email List Tutorial.

### **Why we don't clean lists**

We provide you with tools to help you maintain your email lists, including unsubscribe and spam complaint statistics, however Alchemer was not built to clean lists; in fact, it wasn't even built to be an email service, but we play that role on TV sometimes. Internet service providers, and email protection services set thresholds regarding spam complaints, bounces, and unsubscribe requests and we're required to enforce these thresholds. This helps us maintain our sending reputation and high deliverability standards to ensure that when you send an email campaign, your emails make it to your contacts' inboxes. If your list needs to be validated, we recommend using tools and services specifically designed for list cleaning. Try one of these:

- <http://www.briteverify.com/brite-pricing>

- <http://www.datavalidation.com/email-validation-pricing/>
  - <http://www.leadspend.com/mailchimp-promo>
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## Create Good Email Content

### Effective subject lines

Identify who you are. If you have permission to send to your contacts this should help to get them to open your email. Keep it short and concise for display on mobile devices. Don't use excessive capital letters. Whatever you send to your contacts' inbox should have personal value to them. Show the value in your subject line.

### Good body copy

Start with a warm greeting. Explain the value to the reader in the first sentence. Keep it as brief as possible. Use short survey links (70 characters or less) and include keywords. Put a paragraph break before and after the survey link to make it stand out. Finish with a kind and sincere signature that reflects the personality of your brand and thank them in advance for their participation.

### HTML vs. Plain Text

At Alchemer we recommend plain text emails. There are a number of reasons for this. Plain text emails feel more personal and have higher deliverability rates. HTML emails may be seen as mass marketing emails. In addition, some email clients do not handle HTML emails well. However, if your brand is so powerful that adhering to brand guidelines will get a greater response, use HTML emails (with a plain text alternative in case the HTML cannot be delivered). HTML emails also have the benefit of open statistics.

### Images and Text

Emails with less than 500 HTML characters are more likely to get flagged as spam. The amount of text is most important but the text to image ratio can also affect deliverability.

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## Email Tips and Etiquette

### Segment your list in to smaller, specific groups

Segments allow you to only invite relevant and interested contacts to participate in your surveys. You can also set up different invites targeted towards various key segments of your target population which should increase your response rates!

### Don't send more than one survey per month

To prevent survey fatigue, as a general rule, it is best not to send more than one survey a month. This should keep your response rates up and increase the integrity of the answers

your respondents provide. In addition, you should coordinate your survey emails with other campaigns sent to your contacts.

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## Sending from Your Own Email Address

By default, all emails sent from Alchemer are sent from one of the following email addresses:

Send Email Actions - [noreply@alchemer.com](mailto:noreply@alchemer.com)

Email Campaigns - [invites@mail.alchemer.com](mailto:invites@mail.alchemer.com)

Shared Reports and Exports - [reports@mail.alchemer.com](mailto:reports@mail.alchemer.com)

To enable use of a custom **From Email** address in Email Actions and Email Campaigns (other than the above Alchemer defaults) you must either send from your own (or third party) SMTP server or configure your domain with SPF and DKIM records.

Visit our [Custom Email Settings](#) tutorial to learn more!

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