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How to Avoid Spam Filter Triggers

It is the bane of many marketers: you spend time crafting a beautifully written email, only to have it bounce back from several customer email addresses because something about the email triggered a spam filter. Even lists that customers opt in to can fall prey to aggressive spam filters, which can block up to 20% of email.

Why is my Mom the Only Person Who Reads Our Emails?

There is a long list of criteria that filters use to determine whether or not an email is spam. These factors are added up to a spam score, which determines whether or not an email will be delivered. Passing scores are determined by server administrators, so there is no one set of factors that will guarantee that your message will reach all of your customers each time.

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What Filters Look For

Spam filters (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email_filtering) frequently adapt their criteria based on what subscribers mark as spam in their inboxes, however, these are some universal content pitfalls:

- **Subject Line:** Subscribers need to be able to immediately ascertain what the email is about and who sent it – your email should be intriguing, but not ambiguous. Avoid words like free, limited time, coupons, click now, and open immediately - mortgage, insurance and act now are also trigger words. Excessive punctuation, special characters and creative use of numerals should be avoided. Also be careful not to use phrases that could be confused for adult material by spam filters.
- **Your IP Address:** Some spam filters check your IP address against IP ranges that have been flagged. Unfortunately, if someone in your range is sending spam, your emails may be trapped in filters, as well.
- **Formatting:** All caps, going overboard with colors and using extraneous exclamation points are big red flags for spam filters.
- **Code:** Sloppy code, extra tags or code pulled in from Microsoft Word are confusing for filters, causing your email to be marked as spam.
- **Images:** Too many images, or one single image and no text to accompany the image immediately trip filters. Also, make sure your email includes a plain text version of your message.
- **Your Past:** Many services use community-based reporting to block spam, so if too many of your subscribers have clicked “report spam” in their inboxes, that trend may determine whether future messages are likely to be spam.

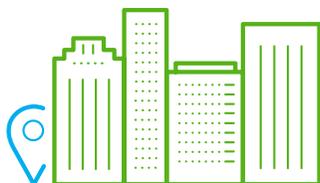
How do I Know if There is a Problem?

The best way to tell if your emails are being marked as spam is to look at your open rate. If you notice a significant decline, it may be due to spam complaints—in general, you should aim for 20-30% opens. Also check out your SMTP replies, which are responses from recipients’ email servers—those replies can tell you if messages bounced due to aborted processes or a permanent error, which both point to spam filtering.

Could you be doing better at email marketing? Contact us (<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1660945/Andrew-Kelly>) and we'll do an analysis to see where we can help you better reach your customers.

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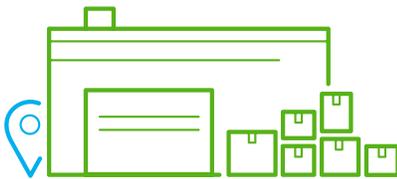
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