3 Critical Principles for

EMAIL MARKETING SUCCESS IN 2016

NuGROWTH Digital

Empowering sales with data driven marketing

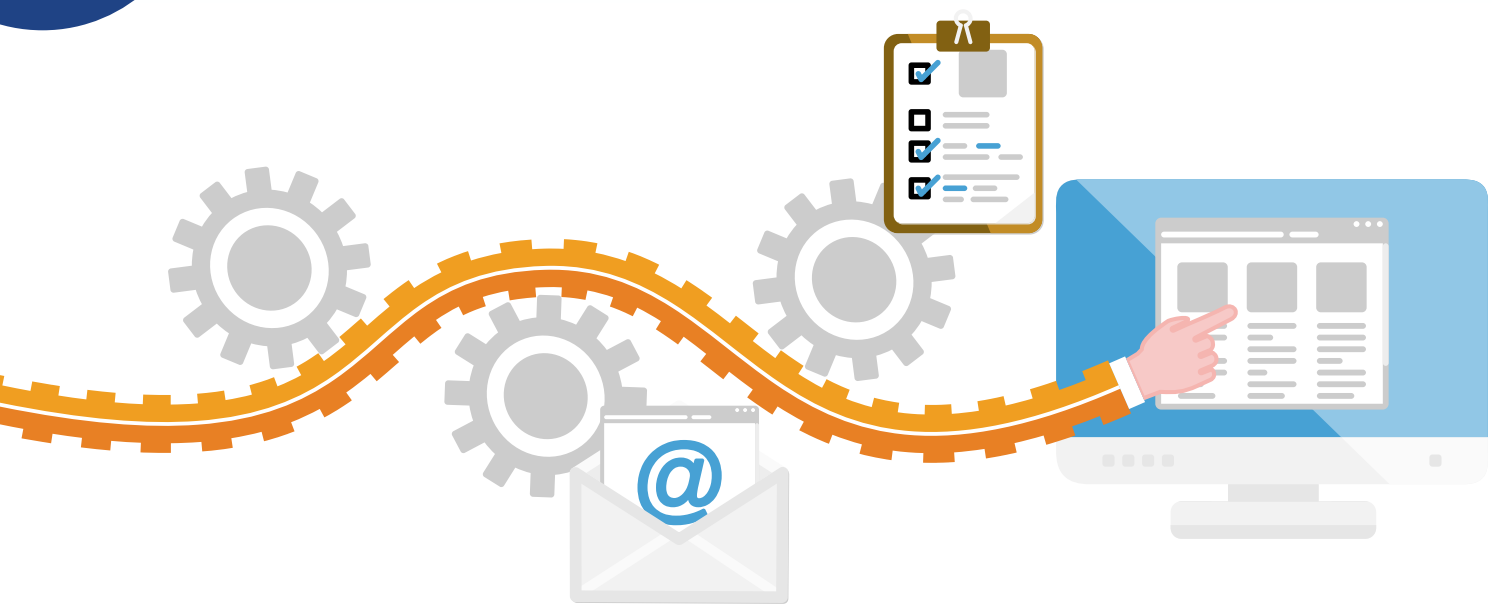
Just like all digital marketing practices, email marketing is evolving-and fast. You may have a killer email marketing content strategy, with messages that are sure to resonate with your intended audience; however, the email can't make an impact for your organization if it never gets delivered.

The reality is that the path from your company's outbox to your audience's inbox includes a number of potholes that impact deliverability. The basics won't cut it anymore.

These are the steps you need to be following in 2016 to make the year an email marketing success...

1 EMAIL SETUP

Begin with the End in Mind



Habit #2 in Steven Covey's celebrated book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," tells us to ***begin with the end in mind***. Good advice in any situation, this is a message that is vital when it comes to email marketing.

Yes, you can launch an email campaign without completing the steps outlined on this and the following pages. But, if the goal is a successful long-term email marketing lead generation effort, you need to take every effort to build and preserve your sender reputation from the very outset.

Create a Subdomain

A subdomain is a separate domain that falls under the umbrella of your primary company domain name (e.g, marketing.yourcompanydomain.com). While subdomains can be used for a number of purposes—from increasing SEO rankings, to niche marketing—the primary purpose, as it relates to email is that it enables you to host separate mailing servers so that you can send mail from your subdomain. Because this domain is used only for mailing purposes, it is less susceptible to cyber risk. In addition, because it is uncontaminated it will be a truer measure of the reputation associated with it (which is only being dictated by marketing).

Establish Dedicated IP Address

An Internet Protocol (IP) address is, in laymen's terms, the specific address assigned to any networked device that uses Internet Protocol for communication. As it relates to email marketing, a **dedicated IP address** is one that is used solely to send email from your organization. Many third party marketing organizations send mail from a shared IP address—pooling your messaging with that of many others. To complicate things further, they often send from multiple email domains and your mail may not even be sent from the **same** server.

This becomes problematic when anyone using that shared IP uses poor email practices, gets blacklisted, or otherwise gets flagged for spam complaints. Even if YOUR organization is doing nothing wrong, you will get pulled down with them.

Another benefit of a dedicated IP address that it enables your team to set up monitoring tools to consistently measure the health of your program.

Set Up "From" Address

When sending an email from Outlook or your own personal account, the "from" line is the last thing you consider. When sending bulk email through a marketing automation tool you need to make sure that it is consistent with your messaging and authenticated. General emails like sales@ or info@ do not improve the relevance and often are not the most trusted.

Complete Email Authentication Steps

Email authentication is especially important in light of the prevalence of hacking, spoofing, and phishing scams because it verifies to organizations that your email message has been validated by your organization. In other words, it's coming from who you say it's coming from. Messages of questionable ownership are more likely to get flagged as spam—even if they're not—making authentication essential for deliverability.

This is not a once per organization activity, it's a once per address activity. You will need authentication in place for every sending domain.

Two acronyms you will often hear associated with email authentication are DKIM and SPF.

DKIM (Domain Keys Identified Mail) – DKIM.org explains that with DKIM, the reputation of the sender serves as the basis for whether a message is worthy of delivery into inboxes. "Technically DKIM provides a method for validating a domain name identity that is associated with a message through cryptographic authentication."[1]

SPF (Sender Policy Framework) – Another means of protecting your sender reputation, SPF is an email validation system designed to protect your domain from being spoofed by hackers—thus ensuring that email that looks as though it's from your organization IS from your organization.

Establish System for Monitoring

Because protecting your sender reputation is an ongoing activity, your set up process should include establishing a system for monitoring reputation score, inbox placement rates, bounce rates, and more. You want to know immediately when, or if, you get blacklisted. You also want to know if your messages are hitting junk folders, or getting blocked by server-side appliances. Both of which can have negative impact on deliverability.

Email Setup Checklist*

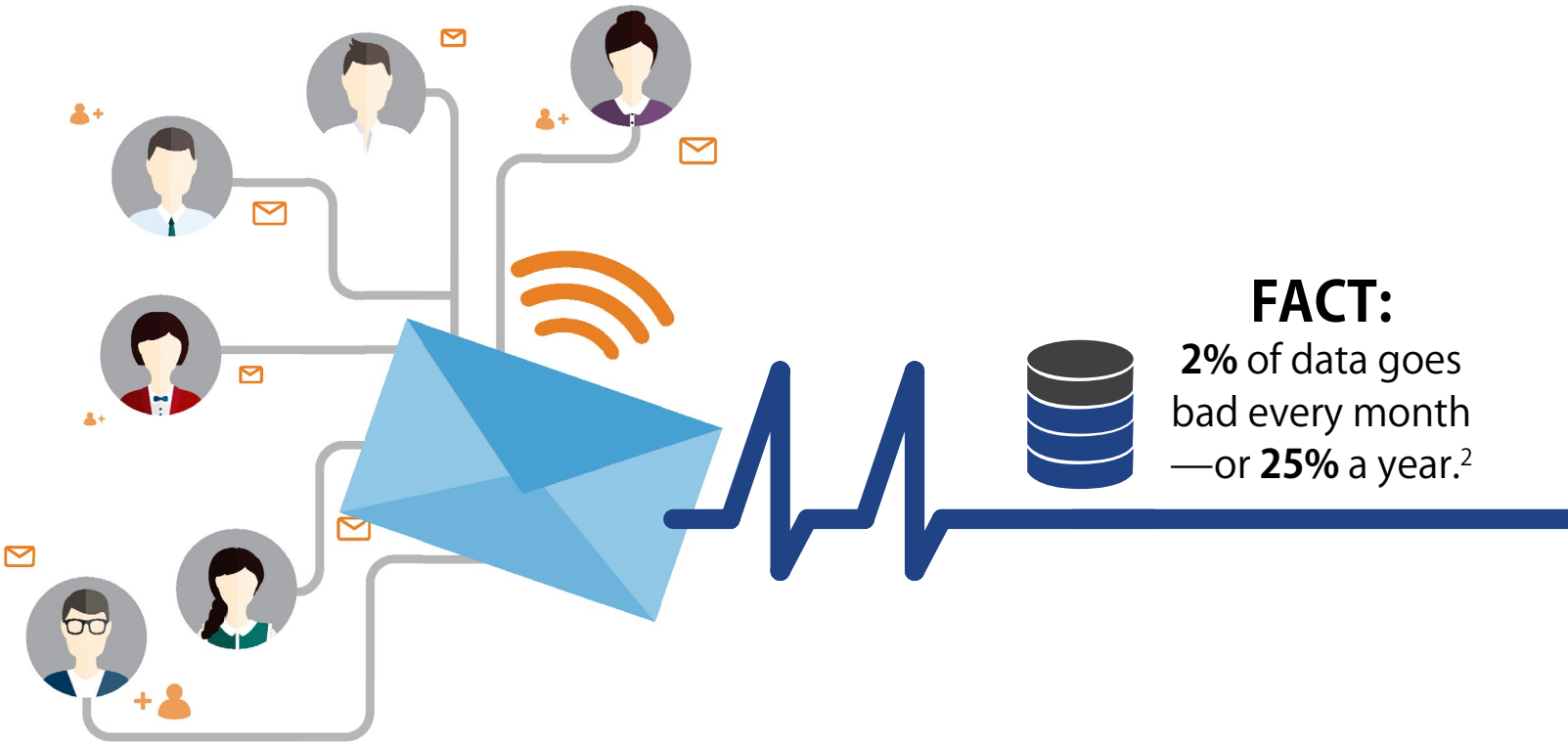
- ☐ Subdomain Created
- ☐ Dedicated IP Address Established
- ☐ From Address Determined Using Your Subdomain
- ☐ Email Authentication Complete for Each From Address
- ☐ Monitoring Setup For:
  - Inbox Placement
  - Reputation
  - Blacklists

*Depending on the mailing service or marketing automation tool you use, some of these things may be done for you, others you will need to do yourself. Regardless, the impetus is on you to make sure it gets done.

[1] http://www.dkim.org

2 LIST HEALTH

It's a Continuous Process



FACT:
2% of data goes bad every month —or **25%** a year.[2]

Anyone who has ever struggled with getting fit or keeping pounds off knows that it requires lifestyle changes, not short fixes. The same goes for keeping your list healthy. Unkept data can lead to a number of deliverability threats that will negatively impact your sender reputation and impact your deliverability rates. The following steps should be repeated on an ongoing basis.

Cleanse any New Lists Added to Your System

It is important to cleanse any new lists added to your system. In doing so, you will minimize the risk of sending to non-existent emails, spam traps or honeypots.*

*There are various levels of deliverability threats, and one of the most common and severe is a spam trap or honeypot. Spam traps are emails that remain active, but are monitored to catch unsolicited email or spam. Emails sent to a spam trap are frequently reported to blacklists and will negatively affect your sending reputation.

[2] http://salesstaff.com/blog/25-of-contact-data-goes-bad-every-year-bad-news-for-b2b-appointment-setting-campaigns/?utm_content=20592773&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter

Identify and Remove Hard Bounces

A hard bounce occurs when you send to an email address that does not exist. These addresses should be removed from your lists **immediately**. They can never be delivered to, and sending to them only hurts your reputation.

Flag and Address Soft Bounces

An email can be flagged as a soft bounce for any number of reasons, including a full inbox, or a policy on the email server that blocks the message. These emails are temporarily rejected—not rejected outright like a hard bounce. It is important to watch these, however, and remove any address from your list that has soft bounced three or more times.

Remove Opt-Outs and Spam Complaints

One of the key factors to maintaining your status as a reputable sender is to NEVER send email to someone who explicitly states that they do not want it. Opt-out requests and spam complaints should be removed immediately.

Rinse and Repeat

Not only should you make it a habit to remove bad addresses after every send, it is also important to CONSISTENTLY run a cleanse on your entire database. Emails for non-active individuals are routinely converted into new traps, making the cleanse imperative for a high deliverability rate.

List Maintenance Checklist

- ☐ Cleanse any new lists added to system
- ☐ Identify hard bounces—remove after one send
- ☐ Identify soft bounces—remove after three bounces
- ☐ Remove opt-outs/spam complaints im mediately
- ☐ Rinse and repeat—make list cleanse procedures a routine part of your monthly activities

3 EMAIL SENDS

The Rules of Effective Engagement

Launching an email can be likened to a successful trip into space. There is nitty-gritty groundwork that you need to complete prior to send-off, including proper email setup and consistent improvements to your list health. And, once that's accomplished, you have the actual event—the email send itself. Your success lies in continued vigilance and adherence to these best practices.

Segment

Most marketers understand the benefit of targeted messages. Those benefits extend to email deliverability as well. The more targeted and relevant the message is to the recipient, the more likely it is to be delivered. Thus, if your database is rigorously segmented, you will know what messages are relevant to each list, minimizing your chances of sending irrelevant messages.

Be Consistent

A good rule of thumb is to remember that ANY change you make—to both your database and your message—impacts deliverability in some way.

Dramatic changes, however, have a higher chance of impacting deliverability. For example, it may be tempting to use a large list immediately after purchasing; however, the best course of action is to spread it out over time.

Send in Small Batches

Sending messages in smaller volumes, especially as you begin your marketing, is less likely to raise flags. Build your list slowly to higher volumes. Not only will this give you time to segment your messaging, your message will also be more effective to a targeted group.

Send to Engaged Recipients First

An engaged recipient is somebody who has previously interacted with your emails. You know that your previous message was delivered to its intended recipient, and not a spam trap.

Sending your email to engaged recipients first means there is less of a chance that your email will get blacklisted, less chance of it bouncing, and a higher likelihood of engagement. This establishes your credibility for the second send to the non-engaged segment. You have a positive reputation now, which positively impacts your deliverability.

Remove Inactive Addresses

There will be legitimate email addresses that do not engage in your messages. This is normal. Remove them from that list and repurpose them—they may respond to a different type of messaging. You can't expect different results by sending the same messages to the same people, and their inactivity is only hurting your deliverability rating.

Deliver on Your Promise

Say what you are offering—and offer what you are saying.

From subject line to body content, consistent messaging is key to remaining a trusted sender. Spam emails frequently use catchy subject lines to lure a reader, but when the body messaging doesn't deliver on the subject, the email goes into the junk folder.

Make it Easy to Get Out

Make opt-out information readily available, preferably at the top of the email message. This may seem scary—giving your audience a quick and easy way to remove themselves from your list—but it's pivotal. In the end, you want to create a conversation. Audience members who do not want to be a part of your conversation shouldn't have to keep listening, and their inactivity only hurts you in the end.

CONCLUSION

Just as the path to successful email marketing keeps evolving, so must your email send tactics. Once you've completed the best principles list, the best thing you can do is to rinse and repeat. And, take comfort in knowing that soon, even this list will change.

About NuGrowth Digital

If you are interested in harnessing the power of marketing automation, but don't have the resources you need to succeed in a timely manner, NuGrowth Digital can help. We leverage the power of outstanding content, marketing automation and CRM integration to provide well-qualified leads that meet the high expectations and standards of our inside sales teams and those of our partners. We do this through a combination of careful strategy, strong content, and broad distribution backed by state-of-the-art systems that enable actionable reporting and complete transparency.

Give us a call at 800.966.3051 to find out more.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Subdomain: A subdomain is a separate domain that falls under the umbrella of your primary company domain.

Dedicated IP: For the purposes of this content, a dedicated internet protocol (IP) refers to a dedicated sending address from your organization for the purposes of email marketing.

Blacklist: A blacklist (e.g., SpamHaus) alerts email security tools of domains and IP addresses that are sending high volumes of unsolicited mail, spam, links to a hacked website, or other red flags. If your IP or domain is on a blacklist, your email deliverability for both your marketing and business email will suffer. If you are blacklisted for any reason, halt all marketing efforts until it is resolved.

Inbox rate: The rate at which your messages are actually hitting inboxes. One of the little known facts about email marketing is the concept of deliverability. Many marketers use the formula: # sent - #bounced = # of emails delivered. The reality is that even emails that are not identified as a bounce may not be reaching your audiences' inbox. Sent mail can fall into one of five categories:

> **Hard bounce:** A hard bounce occurs when you attempt to send to an email address that does not exist.
>
> **Soft bounce:** A soft bounce occurs when an email is temporarily rejected from being delivered. It does not indicate that an email address is invalid.
>
> **Dropped email:** Dropped emails occur when a message is blocked (by a security appliance) on its way to the inbox. Unlike bounced emails, no notice of rejection is sent to the sender. Because of this, these emails are often reported as delivered, but they are not. A dropped email is the black hole of marketing analytics.
>
> **Junk folder (or spam folder):** This category indicates emails that are successfully delivered, but are automatically filtered into a deprioritized, often unread, spam or junk folder. These emails will also be reported as delivered.
>
> **Inbox:** These emails are delivered directly to your audiences' inbox folder.

Placement percent: The ratio of emails that reach the inbox to the number sent.

Opt-out: An opt-out is a mechanism that enables your audience to request to be removed from your mailing list. This mechanism is required by law to be included on all email marketing communications. Other terms for opt-out include unsubscribe or take me off your list.

Spam trap (or honey pot): Spam traps are emails that remain active, but are monitored to catch unsolicited email or spam. Emails sent to a spam trap are frequently reported to blacklists and will negatively affect your sending reputation

Engaged recipient: Engaged recipients are individuals who have recently interacted with your marketing content. Interactions that qualify include an email open, email click, website page visit, content download, and form fill.