**Bulk Opting-In of New Customers**

# 1.1 Background

The major ISPs throttle inbound traffic from IP addresses even if the IP addresses/domains are whitelisted with the ISP. ISPs are becoming more cautious with traffic in order to give them greater protection from spam and phishing attacks.

A favourable reputation is measured by low bounce rates and low spam complaint rates for a given day, and over the history of the IP address. The lower the spam complaint rate and the lower bounce rate with a consistent traffic volume, the better the reputation. As a reputation gains favour, the ISPs will increase their traffic threshold for the given IP address.

However, suddenly adding in a large number (greater than 10%) of new contacts to your subscriber list in one go will cause any user to exceed this assigned threshold and will lower your IP reputation.

In order to avoid this all new contacts should be added incrementally over a number of days in a similar fashion to an initial White Listing process.

# 1.2 IP White Listing

A large Bulk Opt-In should never be attempted until a complete White Listing process has been completed and validated with evidence at least 30 days of high delivery rates for your complete subscriber list.

Small lists or additions can normally be implemented without issue and without the need to throttle the merging of the established data with the new contacts.

# 1.3 General Notes

The key with successfully integrating new data to your subscriber list is to manage the bounce rate and complaint rate in order to ensure you do not lose all the time spent successfully establishing your IP’s reputation. You can also run the risk of being blacklisted by that same ISP.

However, your “White Listed” status will allow for a greater margin of error than was available for your White Listing campaign. Most ISP with allow for a bounce rate of between 10-20% before the threat of Black Listing becomes a possibility.

For this reason in is good practice to contact your ESP (and where possible the individual ISP’s) when you are planning to implement a large scale Bulk Opt-In. They can often help either with recommendations, contacts or temporarily assigning you an IP with a very high reputation.

# 1.4 Quality of Recipients

Depending on the nature of how any new subscribers are acquired (whether it is a competition entry or partner data) it is not always possible to analyse the quality of these new contacts before starting, but where possible it is important to consider whether the:

* Email addresses that have recently opted-in
* Email addresses that have interacted in the past six (6) months (Interaction is defined as opening an email, clicking on a link in an email, or making a purchase
* Addresses older than six (6) months, and certainly older than a year, have a lower “quality” rating because of the increased likelihood of those recipients to click the “This is spam” button. Depending upon the age of the email address, the email address may have been recycled by the ISP to another individual which could also cause recipient complaints.

Unlike, with a White Listing campaign the aim is not just to select the ‘best’ contacts but to trying and develop an even balance between these ‘high’ and ‘low’ quality contacts. It is about ‘managing’ the bounces, not totally excluding them.

# 1.5 Number of recipients for the Bulk Opt-In campaign

The number of recipients you can add at any one point will depend both on the size of any current mailing list and the known quality of the data you wish to introduce.

There are several other domains controlled by the major ISPs. All these domains have to be considered as one and the limits for the number of new contacts to add at once should be totalled across all of them.

As such, the lists created should include global email addresses for the major ISPs as shown in the table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AOL** | **GMAIL** | **MSN** | **VIRGIN** | **YAHOO** |
| 1aol.com | gmail.co.uk | hotmail | ntlworld | btbroadbandoffice.com |
| 2aol.com | google.com | live | virgin | btbusinessoffice.com |
| 3aol.com | googlemail | msn | virginmedia | btclick.com |
| 4aol.com |  | prodigy.net.mx | virginmedia.blackberry.com | btconnect.com |
| 5aol.com |  | q.com |  | btinternet.com |
| 6aol.com |  | windowslive |  | btopenworld.com |
| 7aol.com |  | qwest |  | rocketmail.com |
| 8aol.com |  | webtv |  | sbcglobal.net |
| 9aol.com |  |  |  | talk21.com |
| aim.com |  |  |  | yahoo |
| aol |  |  |  | yahoo.com.au |
| aol.com.ar |  |  |  | yahoo.com.cn |
| aol.com.au |  |  |  | yahoo.com.hk |
| aol.com.br |  |  |  | yahoo.com.mx |
| aol.com.mx |  |  |  | yahoo.com.sg |
| aol.com.pr |  |  |  | yahoo.com.tw |
| aolmail.com |  |  |  | ymail.com |
| compuserve.com |  |  |  | ameritech.net |
| cs.com |  |  |  | flash.net |
| dial.pipex |  |  |  | pacbell.net |
| gateway |  |  |  | prodigy.net |
| homechoice.co.uk |  |  |  | swbell.net |
| jp.aol.com |  |  |  | nvbell.net |
| netscape |  |  |  | snet.net |
| pipex.it |  |  |  | att.com |
| talktalk |  |  |  | att.net |
| tiscali |  |  |  | worldnet.att.net |
| tiscalinet |  |  |  | rogers.com |
| wmconnect.com |  |  |  | bellsouth |

# 1.4 Message Content Guidelines

During this reputation building period the best warm-up campaigns (and initial campaigns following the warm-up) are mainly informational in nature rather than heavily promotional. Messages that are warm, inviting, informational, and demonstrate to the recipient the benefits of receiving mail from you are ideal.

Re-activation, up-sell, lead generation campaigns, or the like naturally have a higher bounce rate and spam complaint rate and an IP address with a neutral reputation or short reputation history does not have enough history to weather the natural spikes of the more aggressive promotional campaigns. The reasoning is akin to a financial credit score when starting or graduating from college; your credit history is short, so creditors provide you a low spending limit, and after establishing a consistent payment history and history of responsible spending the creditors increase your credit limit and give you allowances for small blips that may occur in your credit life.

Recipients are quite choosey when scanning their inboxes and can delete or mark a message as spam based on the “from” address, sender name or subject without opening the message. Clearly stating the customer's brand in these locations as obviously as possible should help keep the customer's spam complaint rate low.

Where possible, recipients should also be encouraged to add this new “from” address to any ‘safe’ list or ‘trusted source’ list provided by there ISP as this will dramatically improve a new senders reputation.

# 1.5 Final Steps to Complete the Warm-up Process

Assuming everything has gone successfully there are one or two final checks that should be completed before finishing any White Listing Campaign.

# 1.5.1 Ensure ISP White Listing has Completed Before Sending

Consult with Alchemy Worx and the ESP in question to confirm that the White Listing has complete. Most major ESP’s will have Deliverability Experts on hand to help you and who will often contact the ISP’s directly to ensure this certification.

# 1.5.2 Assess the Success of Your Warm-up Process.

In order to understand the successful of the warm-up process, please review the following:

Look for the bounce and complaint rates. Consult with Alchemy Worx and the ESP in question to determine if the mailings are within a “safe” range and under the ISP’s acceptable threshold to move forward.

Once these results have been evaluated it is safe to migrate the rest of the distribution list and send the first few campaigns.

During the IP address reputation building campaigns, it is important to keep the numbers of Spam Complaints and bounces low. As mentioned above, these numbers should be monitored on a daily basis. If these numbers get higher than the thresholds in the table below, please contact your Deliverability Consultant immediately.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ISP** | **AOL** | **GMAIL** | **MSN** | **YAHOO** | **VIRGIN** |
| **Max Send Volume per Day** | 3,500 | 5,000 | 10,000 | 5,000 | 2,500 |
| **Acceptable Spam Complaint Rate** | 0.10% | N/A | 0.30% | 0.10% | 0.10% |
| **Acceptable Bounce Rate** | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% | 5% |
| **High Bounce Rate** | 10% | 10% | 10% | 10% | 10% |