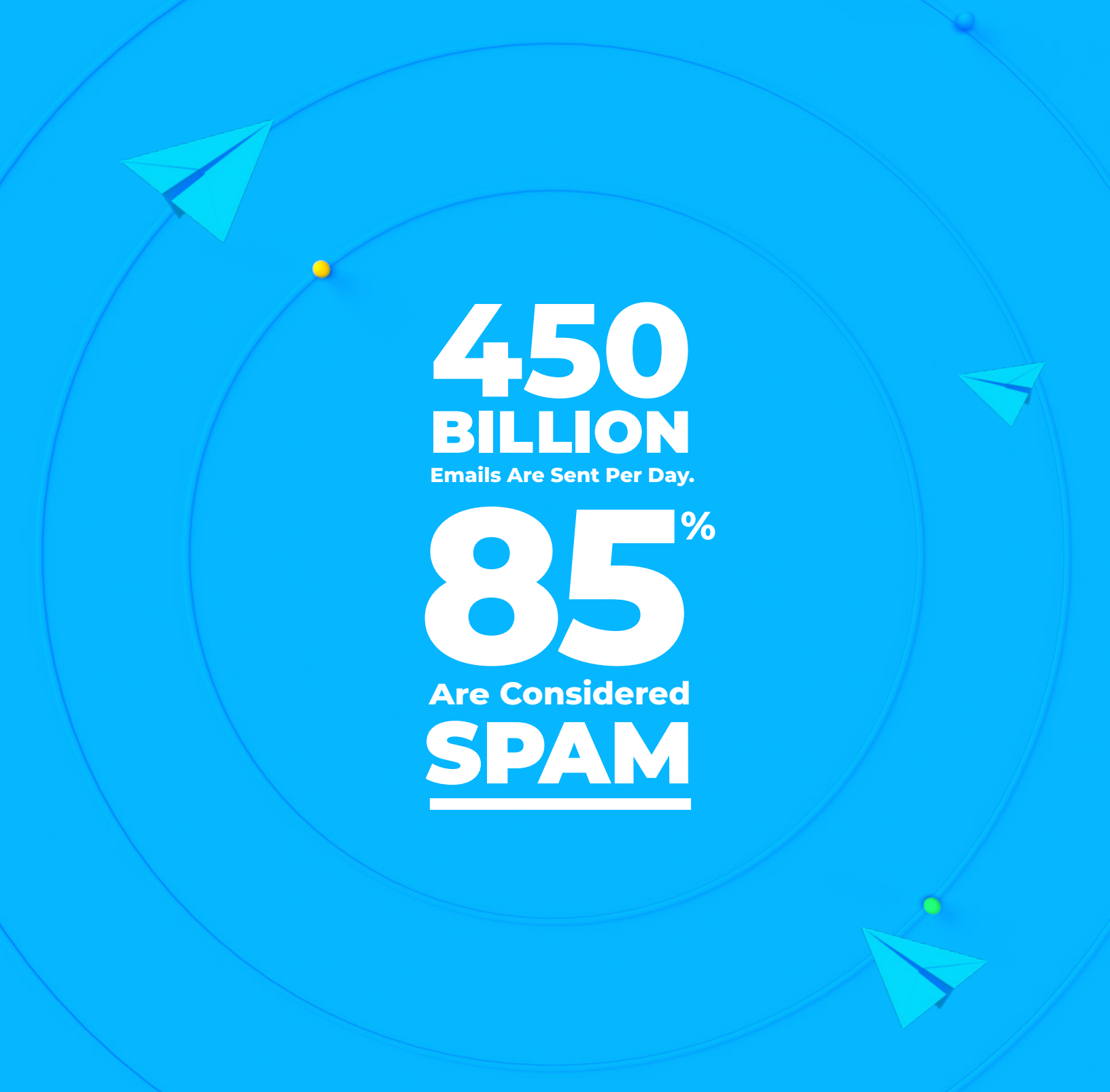


↗ MAROPOST.

Segmented. Sent. Delivered?

Deliverability Hacks





**450
BILLION**

Emails Are Sent Per Day.

85%

Are Considered
SPAM

Now, that's a daunting number for sure, and it gets even worse.

When you consider the fact that **1 in 4 emails sent by brands never even arrive at their destination**, the odds seem to be stacked against email marketers.

But there's plenty you can do to ensure your emails have a better

chance of reaching your subscribers. In fact, there's an entire arm of email marketing dedicated to doing just that.

We're of course speaking about **deliverability**.

Deliverability is a complex system of factors that work together to determine where your emails will go, but there are a few simple steps you can take to improve yours:

Step One: Knowing Your (Sender) Reputation

Email service providers tend to talk a big game about their deliverability rates.

But when it comes down to it, the responsibility for achieving better deliverability rates falls mainly on you, the sender.

And, more specifically, your **reputation**.

Even the most powerful, easy to use, enterprise grade ESP (like, say, Maropost for example) won't be able to boost your deliverability rates if you're bringing a bad sender reputation to the table.

Whether your reputation is stellar or could use some improving, there are a few key factors to building and maintaining a good sender reputation.

Your reputation improves every time your subscribers interact with your emails. This can mean anything from simply opening an email, to adding your sender domain to their address book.

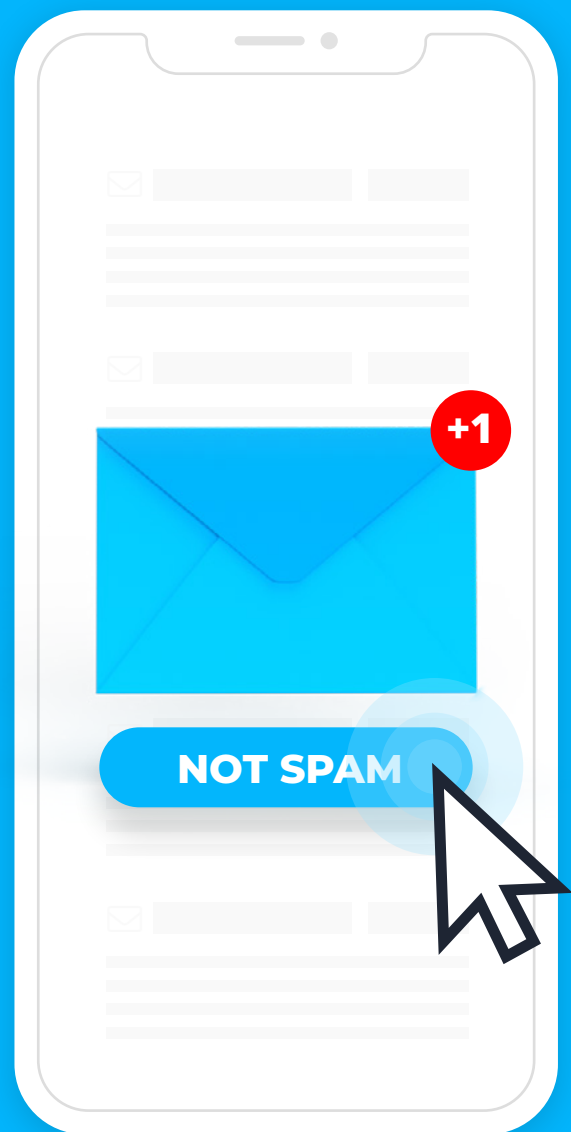
Here's a look at a full list of positive interactions:

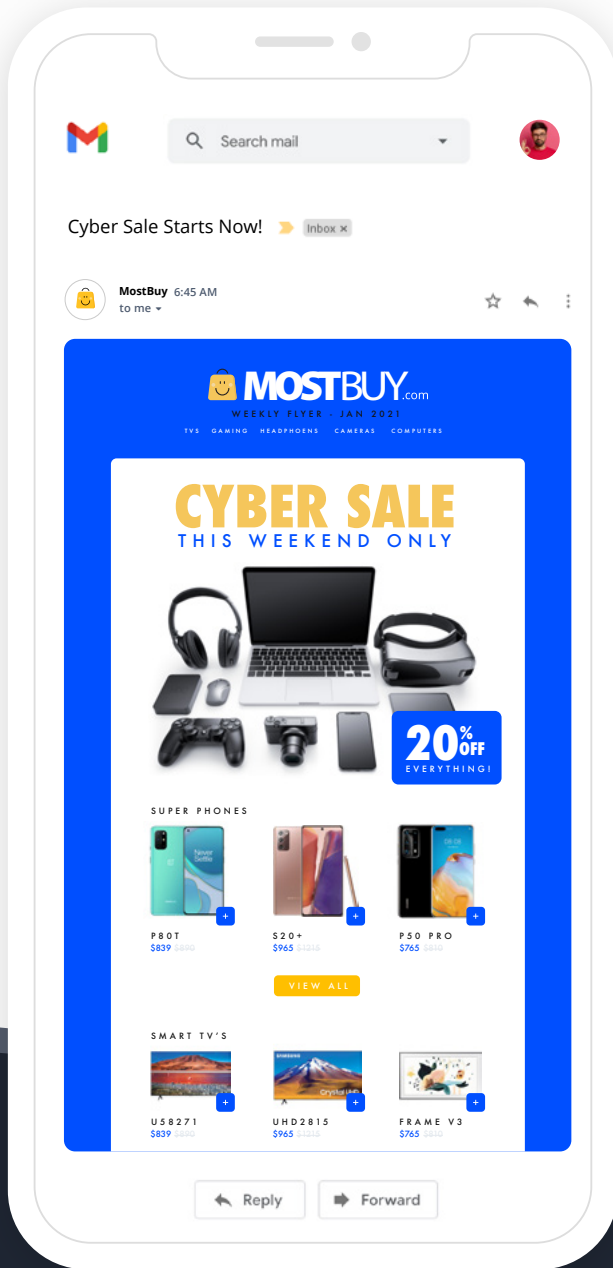
- **Opening your emails**
- **Clicking your emails**
- **Scrolling through your emails**
- **Forwarding your emails**
- **Replying to your emails**
- **Marking your emails as "not spam"**
- **Moving your emails to a folder**
- **Adding your sender domain to their address book**
- **Marking emails as important or starring the messages**

The more of these actions your subscribers take, the better your sender reputation becomes...

The other side of the equation, of course, are the actions you don't want subscribers to take.

Actions like deleting or marking your emails to spam will hurt your reputation.





Here's the full list of what you don't want to have happen to your emails:

- **Marking your emails as "spam"**
- **Not reading your emails**
- **Not clicking your emails**
- **Deleting your emails without opening them**
- **Leaving email in your spam folder**

Now, you may have noticed that these interactions (both positive and negative) are taken by your subscribers, not you. And while it may be frustrating to have something as important as your sender reputation out of your hands, it's an important lesson in one of the main principles of email marketing: **your subscribers come first.**

The success of your email marketing campaign is directly correlated to your sending reputation, so it is very important to regularly monitor and maintain a strong domain and IP reputation. Big mailbox providers such as Gmail & Microsoft provide access to reputation data via Gmail postmaster tool & Microsoft SNDS (Smart Network Data Service) data so senders can monitor reputation and make changes to their email programs accordingly

Which brings us to our next step in improving your deliverability....

Deliverability Score



Step Two:

Making a List and Checking It Twice

In the early days of email marketing, it was all about the size of your list. Now, **quality wins out over quantity**, meaning it's better to have a high quality list than a high volume list.

One of the simplest changes you can make to ensure better quality while building your list is to use double opt-ins.

Double opt-ins allow for a window of time after initial subscription where you can test a new subscriber's activity. If they're not engaging with your emails, they're cut from your list.

And while it may seem tedious and like you're losing subscribers, double opt-ins have a couple of important benefits – strong permission and highly engaging subscribers.

Another thing that sometimes harms some senders is when their opt-in forms get lots of bogus signups due to bots. You should always make sure your opt-in forms are secured with CAPTCHAs, realtime email validation, etc.



Step Three:

Cleaning up the Clutter

After you've built your list, you'll need to remove some subscribers before you start sending. Here's what you'll need to weed out:

- **Duplicate addresses**
- **Addresses with improper structure**
- **Misspelled or gibberish addresses**
- **Addresses that may have been harvested**
- **Addresses with previous bounces**

While it should go without saying, you should never send emails to a bought list.

Bought lists aren't just bad because they're full of spam traps and typically have low engagement rates. They're bad because you're sending emails to people who never agreed (and definitely didn't double opt-in) to hear from you.

Sometimes the fine print of an opt-in form will say that if you give that sender permission to send you email, they can share your email address with other senders. However, opt-in permission is not transferrable. Only send to contacts who have directly given you permission to send to them.

Remember, email marketing isn't about the size of your list, or how many emails you're sending off.

It's about the people receiving those emails. Your subscribers hold your sender reputation in their hands. Knowing how to treat them well will mean the difference between reaching the inbox and reaching the spam folder.

Step Four: Treating unsubscribes as Opportunities

After all that work building and maintaining a clean list, you'll still have to deal with unsubscribes.

As tempting as it may be to hide the unsubscribe link in hopes of keeping as many subscribers as you can, doing this won't just make it more likely for your subscribers to mark you as spam, it'll put you in violation of the email and privacy laws.

All email and privacy laws across the globe mandate senders to have a working unsubscribe link on all outbound messages.

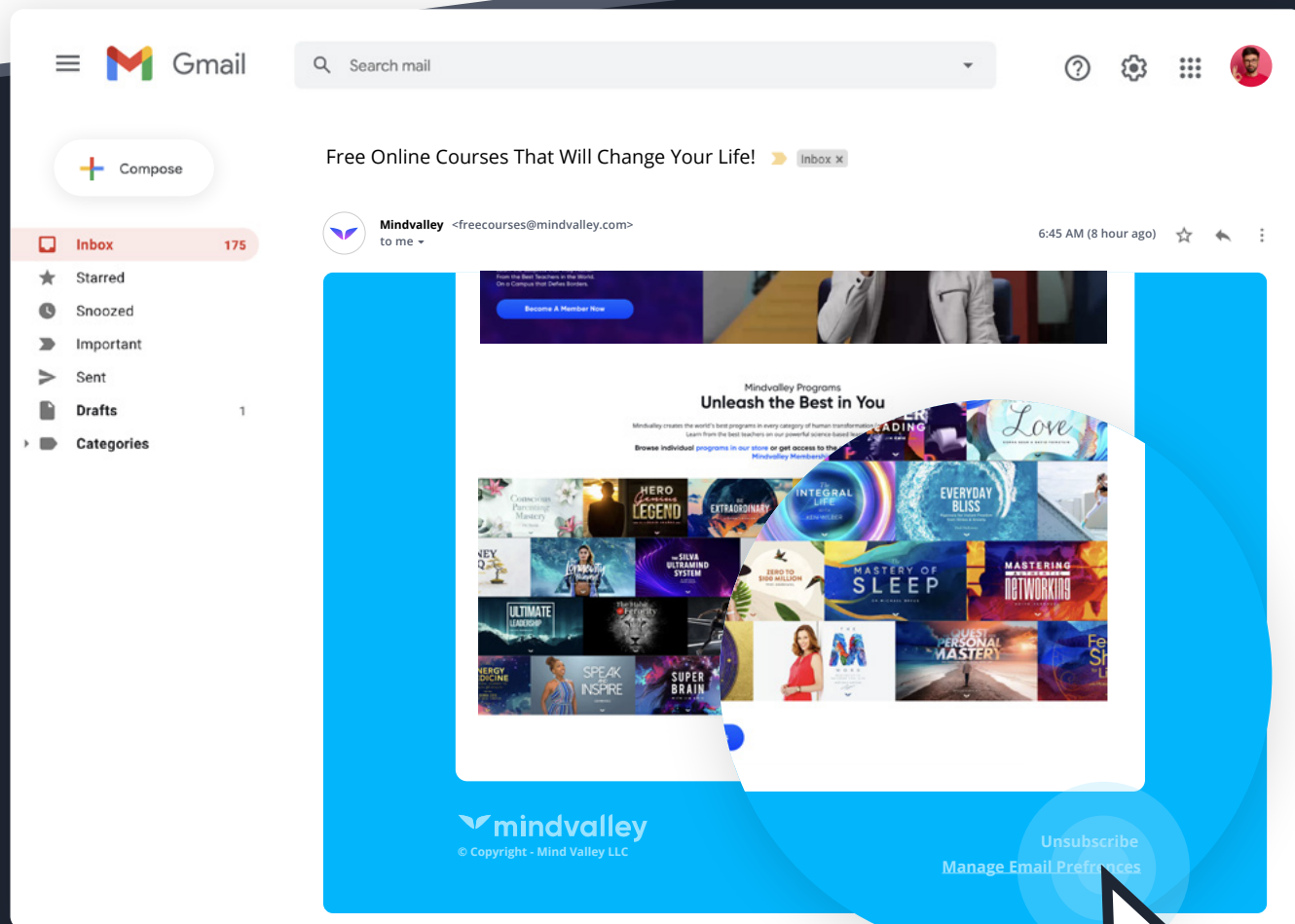
So, for the sake of your subscribers and **the law**, keep that unsubscribe link easily accessible.

Of course, you don't have to take unsubscribes lying down. You can learn to make them work for you.

Offer subscribers options to change their preferences for the frequency and type of emails they receive, as well as different ways to stay in touch—like social media links.

While they're on the way out, soon-to-be-ex-subscribers can act as a great source of data on your emails. Getting them to fill out a survey on why they're leaving can help you improve your email marketing for the rest of your list.

After taking these steps, the best thing you can do is let go. Unsubscribes should be permanent and you should resist the urge to send "just one last email." If subscribers want to return, they will.



Step Five:

Learning to Bounce Back from Bounced Address

Bounces may sound serious, but when you get down to basics, a bounce is just an undelivered email.

The two varieties of bounces you encounter in email marketing are:

The Soft Bounce:

This sort of bounce occurs when your email makes it to your subscriber's server, but isn't delivered, usually due to a mailbox full or a temporary server issue or a block. Unlike hard bounces, soft bounces are delivered after multiple retries.

The Hard Bounce:

As the name suggests, the hard bounces are not retried. This sort of bounce usually stems from issues like invalid email addresses, where the user doesn't exist or the recipient is unknown.

Importantly, every email service provider handles bounced addresses a little differently, so you'll need to be sure how your ESP reacts to both kinds of bounces. Proper bounce handling needs to be in place so that hard bouncing email addresses are removed immediately. It is also good idea to have a suppression rule for soft bounces that consistently bounce with any successful delivery for an extended period of time

And while an occasional bounce doesn't spell disaster for your sender reputation, repeated bounces will take a toll.



Step Six:

Culling With Kindness

So, you've built a clean list with double opt-ins, no bad addresses, and allowed for unsubscribes, now what?

Well, unfortunately, as we all know, things change, and your list is no exception.

Over time, subscribers who were once highly engaged will lose interest. It's inevitable, but it's not the end of the world.

Instead of letting disinterested subscribers sit in your list until they decide to unsubscribe (or worse, mark you as spam), it's best to take a proactive approach.

As we said before, email marketing today is all about the quality of your list, and that means only subscribers who are regularly engaging with your content can make the cut.

The importance of list quality over list quantity arose from an old tactic used by spammers to try to artificially improve their deliverability. By creating a list loaded with inactive addresses, they could ensure that their emails wouldn't bounce and wouldn't get marked as spam.

In reaction to this trick, ISPs shifted their focus to active email addresses for how they measure engagement.

That means the number of spam complaints aren't measured against your total list, but against the active portion of your list. So, **what was once a 1% complaint rate in a 10,000 person list is now a 10% complaint rate, if only 1000 addresses in that list are active.** And while it may feel far more impressive to have a 10,000 person list than a 1,000 person list, all those inactive addresses serve only to hurt your reputation and deliverability over time.

Of course, activity isn't static and a well-executed reengagement campaign can get your subscribers excited about receiving your emails again.

But if a subscriber really isn't interested in hearing from you, it's best to part ways, so you can both move on.

Perception:



Reality:



Step Seven:

Keeping an Eye On Your Spam Complaints

When it comes to spam reports, it's not you... well, sometimes it IS you..

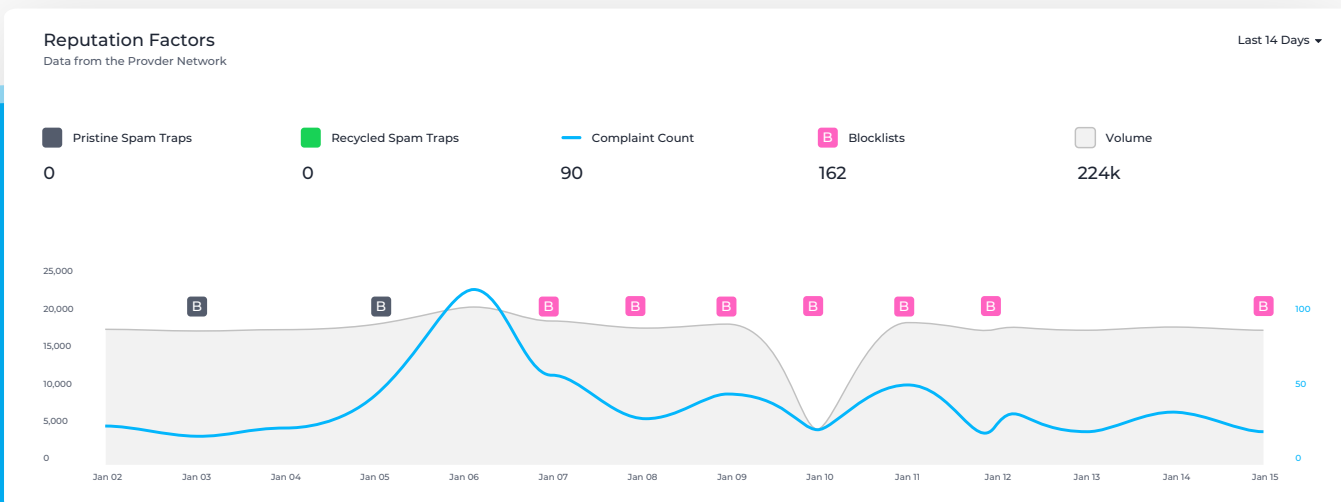
But that isn't always a bad thing.

While spam complaints are inevitable for even the best email marketers, determining which emails are getting the most can provide you with invaluable data.

Knowing what your campaigns are doing to annoy subscribers is a great opportunity to improve your email marketing strategies.

Whether that means **modifying your send frequency, send time, target segment or even your email content, learning to take feedback from your subscribers (even in the form of a spam complaint) will help you create better campaigns.**

Even minor adjustments can help to decrease your spam complaints and increase your deliverability, so those occasional (and annoying) spam complaints are well worth paying attention to.



Step Eight:

Staying Regular

Spontaneity has a time and place in email marketing, and it's not in your send size and frequency.

Making huge changes to the list and frequency of your emails is an easy way to end up on the radar of mailbox providers and blacklist monitoring entities.

Instead, aim to keep a consistent email schedule, and save the creativity for your content. Your broadcasts should be as predictable as possible, for the sake of your subscribers and the monitoring entities looking to protect them. Not only will this establish a set of expectations for your subscribers, it'll also help build your sender reputation.

The same goes for your sending domains and IPs. Those should be as familiar and recognizable to your contacts as possible, e.g., the same domain as the web site where they opted-in. Don't send from brand-new throwaway domains, or rotate domains & IPs to try to circumvent spam-filtering. If your domains & IPs do get bad reputations, it's almost always easier to rehabilitate them by improving your sending practices than by starting fresh, which should only be done as a last resort.

Step Nine:

Creating Better Email Templates

Every email marketer knows content is the basis of a good campaign, but good content means more than being creative, it means keeping an eye out for these content sins that could have your emails seen as spam:

- **Watch your words**

Although the language you use in your subject lines and email content aren't the main determining factor on your deliverability, they still affect how you're seen by both subscribers and mailbox providers.

- **Watch your tone**

You may be excited about your email, but using ALL CAPS and exclamation points will set off alarms for your subscribers' spam filters!

- **Watch your grammar**

Aside from giving your subscribers a good impression of your brand, good grammar and spelling will save you from being seen as a spammer.

Once you have those content rules in place, it's time to take a look at the technical side of your emails: the templates you're using.

When you're looking to build a better sender reputation and better deliverability rates, it pays to tick off a few basic boxes of what every email you send needs to contain (and not contain):

- **Always include your physical mailing address.**
- **Always include a clear "From" address.**
- **Always includes a well-marked unsubscribe option.**
- **Never incorporate embedded forms or interactive content.**

Not only is this functionality not enabled on most email services, but due to security risks, emails containing elements like JavaScript are usually seen as junk.

- **Never attach anything to your emails.**

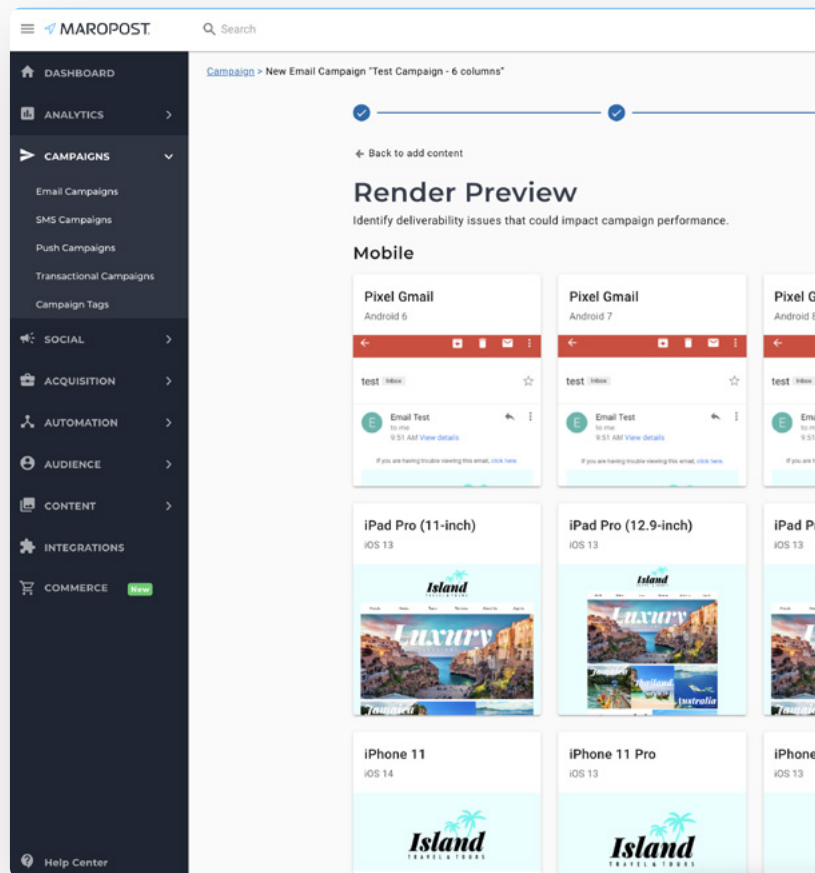
If you want to send a larger file, you're better off providing a link for subscribers to click.

- **Always ensure your HTML is clean.**

Due to spammers hiding malicious code in HTML, any messy code in your emails seen as suspicious and will usually land your emails in the spam folder.

Test your emails before sending it out your subscribers list to verify links, design, spelling errors, and more. Many ESPs offer a way to preview the email in a web app. These email rendering tests also verifies that your email will be displayed optimally for the variety of web clients, email clients, and devices that your subscribers may use

Between these content and template tips, you're well on your way to reaching the inbox.



Step Ten:

Welcoming your Subscribers, Without Overwhelming Them

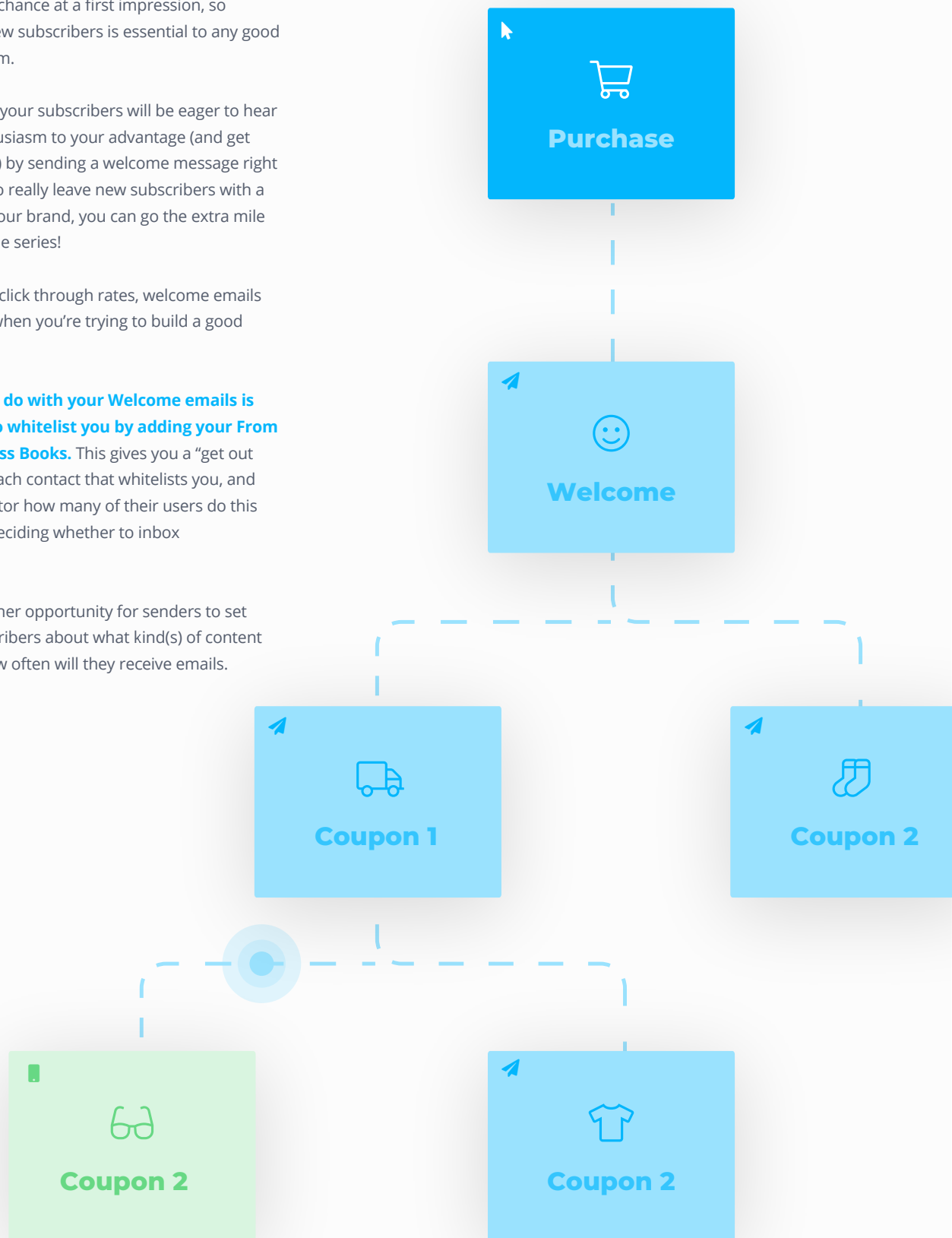
You never get a second chance at a first impression, so knowing how to treat new subscribers is essential to any good email marketing program.

When they first sign up, your subscribers will be eager to hear from you. Use this enthusiasm to your advantage (and get some easy engagement) by sending a welcome message right away. If you're looking to really leave new subscribers with a positive impression of your brand, you can go the extra mile with a complete welcome series!

With sky high open and click through rates, welcome emails offer a welcome boost when you're trying to build a good sender reputation.

Another great thing to do with your Welcome emails is to ask your contacts to whitelist you by adding your From address to their Address Books. This gives you a "get out of spam free" card for each contact that whitelists you, and mailbox providers monitor how many of their users do this for each sender when deciding whether to inbox your email or not.

Welcome emails is another opportunity for senders to set expectations with subscribers about what kind(s) of content will they receive and how often will they receive emails.



BONUS STEP:

Remembering Your Subscribers

As we said in step one, a good sender reputation is the basis of better deliverability. Every action you take to improve your deliverability comes back to that same sender reputation.

But it's important to note that while it might be your reputation, it's not just about you.

Your subscribers are at the heart of your email marketing efforts. Every message you compose and send is going to them.


Your sender reputation, brand reputation, and deliverability are all determined by them. Keeping their interests and wants in mind as you create campaigns will be what ultimately makes a difference.

Don't shy away from saying goodbye to dis-engaged subscribers. Have a sunset rule for unengaged subscribers who have shown a long period of inactivity, that is, not opened or click your messages for an extended period of time and do not send them anymore emails. Try to send a re-engagement series to win them back or re-engage them via other social channels.


Because when it comes down to it, reaching the inbox isn't a right: it's a privilege.



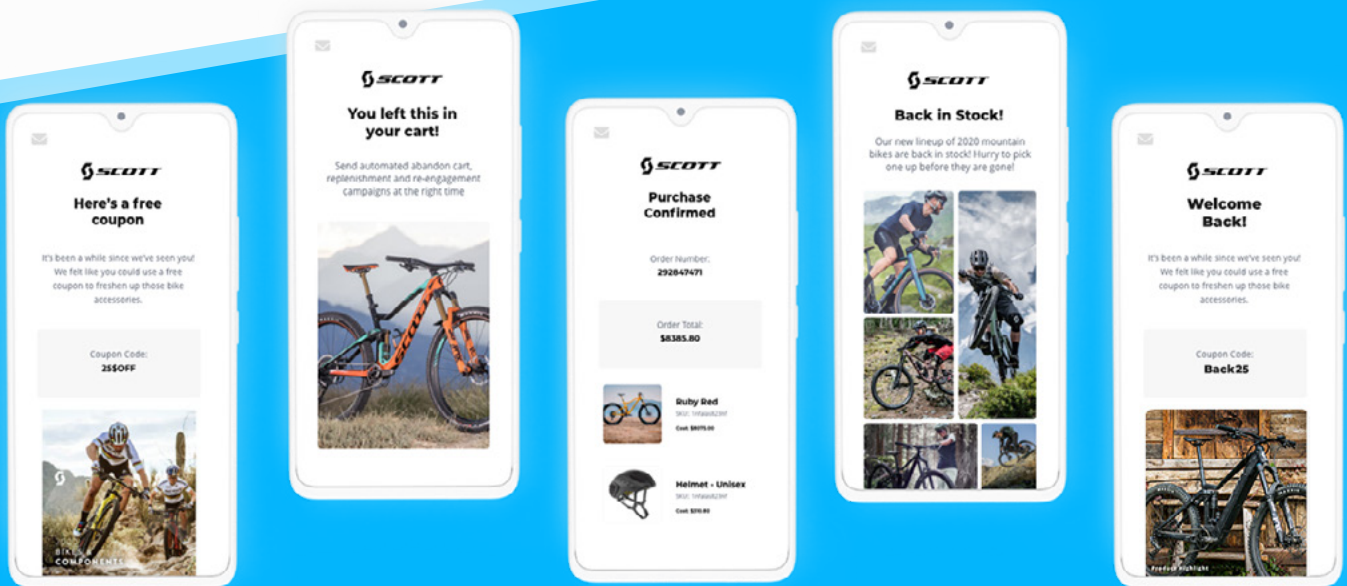
Sender Reputation

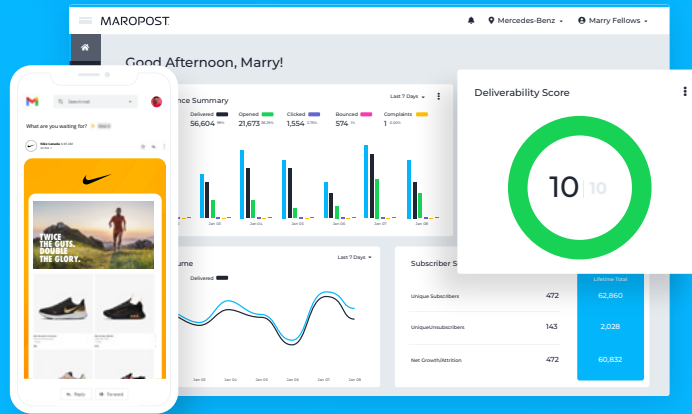


Brand Reputation



Deliverability





**Want to chat with our experts
on how maropost can help with
your deliverability?**