



been caught up in this dilemma, and our mail gets stopped before it even arrives at the sender.

It's all about REPUTATION. When your mailing list is old and contains increasingly more bad addresses, when recipients report your email as SPAM, and when you don't utilize the prevailing authentication mechanisms, your sender address or even your entire domain can get blacklisted. AOL, Yahoo, and MSN/Hotmail tend to be very "trigger happy" when it comes to blacklisting and dealing with them to get it removed is the email equivalent of root canal.

So how can you avoid this? Here are some things you can do. (If these terms are too technical, they are explained in more detail at the web page I will share with you later in this.)

List Subscription – work with your webmaster to make sure these set up correctly on your web site:

- **OPT-IN** for your mailing lists, meaning allow people to subscribe themselves.
- Use **reCAPTCHA** on your subscription form to prevent "bots" from subscribing.
- **Double opt-in** confirmation for your subscriptions.
- An **API service** to verify the email addresses during subscription

These apply whether you are hosting your own email list or using a third party such as MailChimp.

Mail Authentication – have your webmaster work with your web hosting provider to make sure these are properly set up:

- **SPF** (Sender Policy Framework) authentication
- **DKIM** (Domain Keys Identified Mail) authentication
- **DMARC** (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting & Conformance) Authentication
- **PTR** records (reverse DNS lookups) for sending your IPs
- Make sure your **MX record** is set up properly

These would apply when you are hosting your own email list server, or you are using a third-party service that sends mail using your domain name.



Demystifying email list "rocket science"

In previous issues we've talked about email lists and how important they are to our marketing plan. We've talked about email list services such as MailChimp that can jump start your email campaign. We've talked about ways to write an email that people will always open. Our next challenge is getting those emails delivered successfully.

What's that? You just press "Send" and it gets delivered, right?

In theory, yes, and that's how it was back in the "old days", but unfortunately there are numerous hurdles behind the scenes that make it more complicated in today's world. Simply put, things used to be as simple as a backyard barbecue, but along came SPAM, Phishing, Malware and the like to wet on our charcoal. In response to this, many internet providers, email services, and email programs have incorporated filters and other mechanisms to block this type of traffic in degrees ranging from moderate to paranoid. Unfortunately, many legitimate email senders – including us – have

Things you can do yourself, and would apply in all cases.

- **Do not buy or rent lists.** Take the time to build your own from people who WANT to receive your mail.
- **Clean your email list regularly** – this is something you should do at least once a year. There are a number of services that will do this for you. The one I prefer is zerobounce.net
- **Make sure your domain/IPs are not on any blacklists.** There are a number of services to assist you with this.

If you find yourself having been blacklisted, there are free and paid whitelisting services. It may take some effort, and will require a lot of patience and persistence, but it can be resolved.

Further reading: I highly recommend *“The Guide to Email Deliverability”*. It explains things very well and is a good resource for learning more about this topic.

<https://www.zerobounce.net/guide-to-improve-inbox-and-delivery.html>