

## **Congratulations on becoming a ResponseGenius client!**

We look forward to working with you to optimize your email messaging. We've put together this document to maximize your email deliverability success.

Email deliverability, especially promotional email, is a challenging game of back and forth between senders, clients, copywriters, and, most importantly, the ISP's who guard their client's inboxes.

Although the ISP's speak loudly about guarding their client's privacy, their primary concern is more likely delivering your free emails to their clients. Your emails (particularly promotional emails) represent marketing dollars they would prefer to be paid directly to them. There is no real upside for Gmail to deliver your promotional emails to their clients. The ISPs are revenue generating businesses, and your emails are not generating revenue for them.

The algorithms used by the ISPs to determine which emails are flagged as spam are top secret and are constantly changing. And their enforcement efforts change as well. Suddenly, the emails you've been sending successfully to Yahoo subscribers all get blocked - for a reason known only to Yahoo.

Every word, image, link and HTML coding is instantly analyzed by the ISP, and each system may assign different weights to components of the email. FeedBack Loop (FBL) responses are shared by all the Postmasters, so if someone from Yahoo flags your email as spam, all the postmasters will be aware of it.

ResponseGenius is in the business of helping you deliver your emails effectively. We have produced this document to provide best practices and help you avoid the typical pitfalls of email delivery.

## **Technical Details**

### **1. If you have purchased your own sending domain:**

- Have us verify your DNS Settings
- Create the Yahoo FBL (when you request the code from Yahoo, send an email immediately to Support@Responsegenius.com. Yahoo sends the codes to us with no identification of which domain it's attached to - so if you don't give us a head's up, we have no idea who the code is for)
- Register your sending domain with Gmail.
- Create your DMARC account
- If we created your sending domain, we've done all of this for you.



## **2. Always set the bulk mail header to Yes**

**(See Email Profiles > Settings > Sender Details > Mail Header Settings > Include Bulk Mail Header = Yes)**

You can't fool the ISP's, and trying to do so will only annoy them. Letting them know this is a bulk mailing helps them to better schedule delivery.

## **3. Always create a plain text version of your content.**

Even though people rarely see the plain text, the ISP's consider it a best practice, and they want to see that you are following the rules. Text versions of your emails can be automatically created in the ResponseGenius platform.

## **4. Do NOT have two different versions of your opt out.**

Some third-party mailers will have two opt outs – one for their list and one for the specific mailer. This practice is a ticket to the spam folder.

## **5. DO create the Gmail preferred opt-out, at the top of your content, in addition to the traditional opt-out link at the bottom.**

## **6. Set your Solution Settings to ignore clicks/opens and opt outs created by link scanner protection filters (such as Barracuda and SpamAssassin.)**

These filters often check some or all of the links in your email to verify they are deliverable. This can play havoc with your open/click metrics. To avoid this problem, go to **Solution Settings > Configuration > Template & Campaign Defaults > List Scanner Protection > Do Not Record Statistics for Suspected Mail Filters**

## **7. Throttle your sending speed.**

Optimal sending times are 5-6 hours per mailing. So if your mailing is 50,000 emails, throttle to 10,000 per hour.

## **8. Use all 24 hours in a day and stagger your mailing times.**

For example, if you want your emails to be seen first thing in the morning, you can start delivery at 1:00AM. If you have more than one sending pool, split your mailing into segments and send each segment through a different sending pool, staggering delivery times.

## **9. Use Intelligent Sending Mode.**

IMS will split your file into opens and non-opens. Opens are based on any open in the last 12 months, and are maintained at the user level, not list level. Someone may be on multiple lists. If they have opened an email to any campaign sent to any list, their user record will be flagged as an opener. This platform will send the opens first, then wait a designated time period before sending the rest of the file. The idea is that the IPs will see a lot of engagement from the first batch, and be responsive to delivering the second batch. This function is available at **Send Campaign > Delivery Settings > Intelligent Sending Mode.**

## **Ramp Up**

### **1. Every IP address and sending domain start out with a neutral rating by the ISPs.**

It is critical to move this rating to Good before you start sending out large volumes of email.



## **2. ResponseGenius uses an automated warm up program to help change the rating to good.**

- We will upload a warm up list to your account. This contains email addresses from all the major ISPs. We ask that you include as many seed emails as possible to this file.
- ResponseGenius will create an automated warm up program in your account.
- You need to create 4-5 templates in your account. These templates must be viable (dates that make sense, links that work) as we will use these templates in the automated program.
- The Warm Up program will send out an email every day for 30 days (per IP address)
- Recipients should move the emails physically into the Inbox, then open and click on every email, every day.
- By the end of the first week, you will see all the emails coming into your inbox, rather than your spam folder.
- After 2 weeks, we ask you to start sending out small quantities of your emails each day.

## **3. ResponseGenius will provide you with a ramp up schedule that slowly increases your sending volume on a regular basis.**

## **4. Critical factors in deliverability are consistency and engagement.**

You need to send emails on a regular basis and opens and clicks play a vital role in ensuring deliverability.

## **List Practices**

### **1. Keep your list clean.**

- Remove all hard bounces immediately. They will be in the Global Suppression file at ResponseGenius, but if you maintain your database off-site, remove them from your database asap.
- Same with opt-outs – flag them on your database right away.
- If possible, use a service to run hygiene on your file and flag and delete all suspected spam traps. Do this on a regular basis. Expired emails can become spam traps very quickly.
- Don't use role-based Sender addresses such as info@ news@, etc.

## **Content**

### **1. If at all possible, use the recipient's name in the To: field.**

The RG platform does this easily, and it will increase your sending score.

### **2. Add the "View in web browser" link.**

Some email clients just will not display your content properly; this allows the user to properly view your content.

### **3. The RG platform will run deliverability tests against your newly created template.**

Pay attention to the warnings being displayed and correct them. Broken links can make your content be flagged as spam.

### **4. Put your template on a diet.**

Very large templates (over 100KB) are often bloated with styles and tags, and some email clients won't accept them.



## 5. These are all spam flag triggers, and should be avoided:

- No CAPS in the subject line or the copy.
- No exclamation points in your subject line.
- Don't use red text or multiple color text, yellow highlighter effects or multiple mixed fonts.
- Don't use video, Flash or JavaScript. Most email clients don't allow these – use a link to a video instead.
- Don't embed forms. These are generally not supported in email clients. Use a CTA button instead.
- Do use spell check. Spelling errors are unprofessional – and also are spam triggers.
- Don't use just one huge image (one large image as your entire email, for example)
- Don't use too many images. The ISPs look at the ratio of text to image as well as the actual word count – and they want more words than images.
- Don't stuff your email with keywords.
- Be sure that all landing pages are secured sites (with an HTTPS designation). The large ISPs often will either not deliver or put into the spam folder emails with unsecured links.
- Dear Friend. Don't use Dear as a salutation. This is not your Mother or your Uncle Fred. Use Hi or Hey or some other salutation along with their first name. Don't use Friend. This clearly shows you don't know to whom you are mailing.
- The word FREE will often be flagged as spam.

## 6. Subject Lines

- Should be clear and attention grabbing – 50 words or less is optimal.
- Use personalization in your subject line
- Test Subject lines with an A/B Split. The ResponseGenius platform makes this very easy to do.
- Try using an actual person's name as the Sender, rather than a generic company name. Try testing different "From" names.

## 7. Preview Text

- Try using personalization in your preview panel; i.e., "John, here are six reasons you should..."
- Always take the time to create preview text. If you're promoting a special offer, include it in the preview. Gmail recommends this as a best practice to get prioritized in the Promotions folder.

## 8. CTA

- Should be clear and focused.
- Avoid the "zig-zag" promotion. This is usually a free offer that requires the Opener to navigate through a series of additional required contact information. These offers have very high abandonment rates.

## 9. Opt-Out

- CAN-SPAM requires a clear opt out link and physical address in your email footer.
- Gmail and Apple Mail have their own version of Opt-Out they recommend be inserted in the upper left corner of the email. This link will go to Gmail or Apple as well as back to ResponseGenius.
- If possible, include the Gmail/Apple opt-out. The ISPs like to see it, and it will help your deliverability.



**10. Include your Social Sharing links.**

**11. Be sure your email is mobile responsive.**

Over 60% of email today is opened on a phone or tablet.

**12. Create a content block asking recipients to add you to their contacts so they can receive all your emails.**

Include this at the bottom of every email. Using a VCard in the content block will automatically add the correct contact information. If even a tiny fraction of contacts do this, it will help your overall reputation.

**Other Information Sources**

<https://sendgrid.com/blog/8-best-practices-to-improve-your-email-deliverability/>

<https://sendgrid.com/resource/email-guide-ip-warm-up/>

<https://optinmonster.com/email-deliverability-best-practices/>

<https://www.activecampaign.com/blog/how-to-improve-deliverability/>

<https://www.mailigen.com/blog/24-expert-tips-to-improve-your-email-delivery-2/>

<https://blog.sendinblue.com/email-deliverability-best-practices/>

<https://www.sparkpost.com/blog/email-deliverability-best-practices-gmail/>

