

Data Quality and Your Digital Reputation

An Experian Data Quality Guide



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According to a recent Experian Data Quality study, email continues to serve as the most important communication channel for marketers. This ongoing reliance on the email marketing channel means that deliverability challenges can severely impact your organization. And although a strong data quality strategy can help prevent some deliverability threats, ISPs incorporate several additional factors in determining your digital reputation.

This resource explains how data quality, especially related to email addresses, can impact your digital reputation and ultimately your email marketing results.

What determines your digital reputation?

ISPs look at a variety of factors when determining your digital, or more specifically, your sender reputation: who you are sending to, the type of information in your email, and even your previous sending history. This is why you should manage your sender reputation as part of your ongoing email marketing strategy, that is inclusive of a data quality element.

When looking for ways to improve your sender reputation, there are several key areas to focus on. The most common factors that affect your sender reputation are:

1. Email authentication
2. Number of email addresses in your sending list
3. Previous spam complaints and hard bounce rates
4. Spam traps and blacklist inclusion
5. Content within your campaign
6. Engagement (active and inactive subscribers)

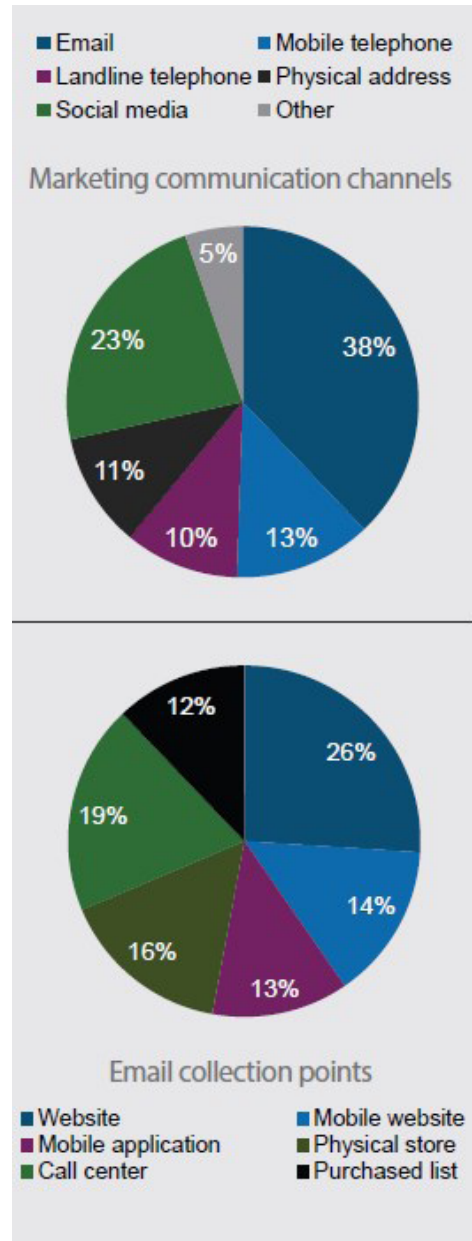
Managing your sender reputation

It might seem as if there are many different elements to keep track of in order to manage your sender reputation. Several of these, however, should be maintained easily through any reputable email service provider(ESP). In most cases, these elements relate to your email marketing sending habits and list management practices. Some tips to help avoid spam traps are:

1. Remove any hard bounces
2. Send at least one email to every member of your database every six months
3. Remove inactive subscribers

Avoiding spam traps

Eliminating spam traps from your contact database should be an important part of your contact data quality strategy. Although it is a difficult process to handle, it is the one that poses the most significant risk to your digital reputation. In order to avoid adding spam traps to your database, first know there are several different types of traps that you could encounter:



Data Quality and Your Digital Reputation

Honey pots – accounts created by blacklist providers, not for communication, but rather to lure spammers.

Zombie accounts – email addresses that at one time were active, then were left inactive for a period of time (6-18 months), and have since been reactivated by the ISP to identify senders with poor data hygiene practices.

Typo traps – mistyped email addresses at domains that are registered by blacklist providers.

Notice that spam traps aren't just obtained by poor collection habits, like using purchased lists. This is why it is crucial to validate addresses not only as they are collected, but to have an ongoing maintenance plan for your email database. This combination of real-time validation and ongoing maintenance should help prevent the addition of any spam traps and ensure valid addresses for your historic contacts as well.

How to avoid the blacklist

For organizations who fail to maintain their digital reputation, the very real threat of landing on a blacklist exists. However, it's important to keep in mind that not all blacklists are created equally, and some are far more serious than others.

Essentially, blacklists are used to keep track of problematic IP's and domains. ESP's can then reference those problematic senders and block those senders' email. Some of the most prominent blacklists include SPAMhaus, SpamCop, and URIBL. Although they aren't universally referenced, they are widely used, and landing on one of these lists can pose serious complications for your organization's email delivery.

The most efficient way to avoid these blacklists is to consistently use proper email list hygiene and collection methods, maintain your email lists on an ongoing basis, and keep spam traps off of your email lists.

Implementing data quality

Data validation tools can greatly improve the accuracy of the data entering into your database, along with validating the information already in it. It's important to utilize data quality software to proactively manage data quality in addition to searching functionality within your database. When implementing a data quality strategy, consider that it should be an organization-wide effort, since information is collected from a variety of departments and often utilized by even more groups within the business.

In most cases, different databases exist across different channels or departments. On average, businesses are operating with four different databases. Therefore, if information is inaccurate in one database, it could be impossible to find an exact match to records with correct information in other databases.

Although email validation is critical to preventing spam traps and managing your digital

Did you know...

89 percent

of organizations believe their customer and prospect data might be inaccurate in some way. On average, respondents thought

25 percent

of their data might be wrong.

Call centers produce the poorest data quality. 52% find it to be among their top 3 most problematic channels. 49% find websites to be problematic.

Based on findings from the 2014 Experian
Global Research Study

Data Quality and Your Digital Reputation

reputation, it's important to validate all of the information in your database in order to make your customer interactions as impactful and accurate as possible.

By preventing contact data errors, you'll ensure delivery of your marketing message while providing your entire organization accurate customer contact data that will assist as they streamline processes, tighten revenue collection, and avoid shipment and communication delays that can irritate the customer.

About Experian Data Quality

Experian Data Quality is a global leader in providing data quality software and services to organizations of all sizes. We help our clients to proactively manage the quality of their data through world-class validation, matching, enrichment and profiling capabilities. With flexible software-as-a-service and on-premise deployment models, Experian Data Quality software allows organizations around the world to truly connect with their customers by delivering intelligent interactions, every time.

Established in 1990 with offices throughout the United States, Europe and Asia Pacific, Experian Data Quality has more than 13,500 clients worldwide in retail, finance, education, insurance, government, healthcare and other sectors. For more information, visit <http://www.qas.com>.

Experian Data Quality
125 Summer St Ste 1910
Boston, MA 02110-1615
T 888.727.8330
dataquality.info@experian.com
www.qas.com



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