

Session Title: The Secret Science of Email Deliverability - #15NTCemailftw

#15NTCemailftw  
@justlikeharmony

How to get people to read and open your email  
-- people are at the center of your campaign

Treat email as a conversation (and put people at the center)

1. Listen (capture data) - What kinds of actions are they taking, and what topics do they care about?
2. Respond (segment and target)
3. Remember (avoid silos) - Remember what conversations you're having on different platforms. (Don't say, "Nice to meet you!" across channels with existing supporters.)  
Collect data: do they follow us on Twitter? Are they already on our newsletter list? Don't talk to them as if you don't know this data
4. Repeat (build a relationship)

make people feel heard

Don't email in a vacuum

1. Incorporate email into your overall comms strategy
2. Text blasts, tweets, and calls should be tracked alongside email
3. Don't ignore people who won't email you

Most importantly, when emailing...

Don't. Be. Creepy.

1. Don't buy lists. Ever.
2. If they aren't that into you, take the hint and unsubscribe them.
3. Don't try to trick people into getting on your list. - Be transparent about what people are signing up for.
4. Introduce yourself. - Not everyone remembers what lists they sign up for.
5. Business cards are \*not\* opt-ins.

What does inbox engagement really mean?

Even with stellar sender reputation, a specific message may still end up in the junk folder of someone's particular inbox.

- All inboxes are different
- Sender reputation is separate from inboxing - reputation only gets you to the door; after that, the end user shows how the information is relevant to them

5 signals of GOOD engagement based on user inbox behavior

1. Marked as "Not junk" (VERY GOOD): strong, positive signal that the msg should not be

considered spam (AOL “resets” the previous behavior)

2. Add to address book (VERY GOOD): shows the sender matters to the recipient
3. Reply (VERY GOOD): a super-strong signal of engagement (thus, never use a no-reply@ email address!); a two-way street
4. Open (GOOD): has become a less relevant metric, open rates are still tracked; a positive signal
5. Move to folder (GOOD): shows the recipient cares about the message

### 3 signals of bad engagement

1. Delete without open (BAD): quick glance at sender/subject and recipient didn't like it; negative signal
2. Move to junk (VERY BAD): a strong, negative signal. Two “moves to junk” on AOL - automatically place sender's message in the spam folder from then on (for that recipient)
3. This is SPAM (VERY BAD): another strong, negative signal. For Outlook, flagging msg as spam hurts overall sender reputation. The rest of the signals affect inbox personalization

### ISPs recommended best practices

- Right acquisition: Start by following best practices when getting people to opt in (double opt in recommended)
- Right engagement: Don't send the same thing to everyone. Personalized and segment.
- Right metric: Find a way to meaningfully track recipient engagement (opens are important, but also consider things that matter to your recipients like time, date)
- Right flow or quantity: Ramp-up at the beginning and ramp-down for inactive recipients - especially for people on gmail.com domain
- Right opt-out: Make sure that recipients can easily unsubscribe (one click)

### State of Email

#### 2014 Return Path Inbox Benchmark Report:

<http://landing.returnpath.com/deliverability-benchmark-2014>

#### Radicati Group:

<http://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Email-Statistics-Report-2014-2018-Executive-Summary.pdf>

Even though someone has signed up for your list, after 6 months they might not care anymore and send you to spam.

#### Why deliverability matters:

#GivingTuesday: 23.67% spam, 8.75% open, 2.64 emails sent = \$ lost

End of year: 10.6% spam, 8.9% open, 2.8 emails sent

What goes into deliverability?

Content

Spam software

Spam software rules

Blacklists

IP reputation

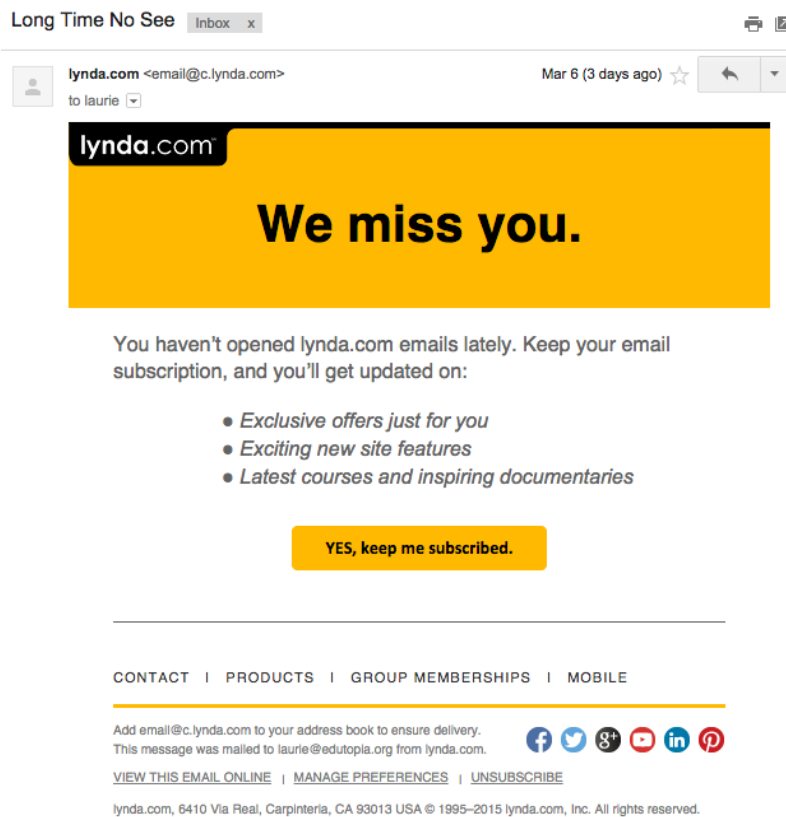
Domain reputation

Traffic

Speed of

What are inactive emails?

- Email address that hasn't opened or clicked
  - Open, click - what senders can see; Email Service Providers measure more
- After 1 year, should message differently
  - Who hasn't opened or clicked? Try a "winback campaign" - survey, go to Facebook, "click here" to stay on ("Do you still want to hear from us?")
  - Remove them after that



- Spam traps

Inactive emails are like zombies. One or two are okay, but a hoard will kill you!

→ It's not about email list size anymore. It's about the quality!

- Don't measure list size; measure opens and clicks, actions
- Better, accurate results
- Pay less
- Greater success

Cut your list. It will cost you less. Example that hard numbers on opens went up after a list cut.

Don't be afraid of double-opt in; don't be afraid to add an extra step. You don't want the people who won't don't opt in.

Gmail tabs - studies have actually shown increased deliverability and interaction

see: [http://returnpath.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Report\\_Gmail\\_Tabs\\_Analysis.pdf](http://returnpath.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Report_Gmail_Tabs_Analysis.pdf)  
<http://blog.mailchimp.com/how-gmail-tabs-affect-your-email-marketing-an-update/>

Managers won't want to hear that you need to cut your list. You can prove it by testing deliverability. Also, many ESPs will charge for the number of records whether they're good or bad, so you need to cut the dead weight.

Don't assume that because someone is engaging with you or donating that they want/need to receive emails! Maybe they like your social media or other engagement instead. (Think upcoming Gen Z.) Is your goal to build an email list...or to get people to take an action?

Are you in spam jail?

<http://powerthruconsulting.com/blog/are-you-in-spam-jail-with-gmail-hotmail-and-how-to-bust-out/>

How to clean your email list:

<http://powerthruconsulting.com/blog/spring-cleaning-your-email-list-for-deliverability/>

5 Tips for Better Nonprofit Fundraising Emails

<http://blog.everyaction.com/5-tips-for-better-fundraising-emails>

How to get people to open your newsletter (video training)

<http://wholewhale.com/get-people-open-newsletter/>