

## BEST PRACTICES

# Avoiding the Spam Folder

Even a well-planned campaign can be disrupted if an email never reaches the customer's mailbox. The culprit? Sophisticated spam folders that send messages straight to the trash. There is no foolproof method for entirely bypassing spam filters since they're constantly being adapted and improved. However, Stirista offers email marketers some strategies to decrease the chances of an email being sent to spam.

## **PICK THE RIGHT AUDIENCE**

The first element of a successful email campaign is to correctly target your potential customers. Having a better-targeted audience will mean that these users are more likely to open your email—sparing you from the spam filter. It's also important to note that a user's subscription to certain lists with similar topics will also help your email slip through the spam filter.

## **PICK THE RIGHT SENDING METHOD**

Spam filter software determines if an email is spam by first analyzing the sender's address. It's always a best practice to send any campaign from a legitimate corporate address.

## CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE SUBJECT LINE

The amount and choice of words in the subject line is often the determining factor in whether an email is placed in the spam folder. When creating a subject line for a campaign, it's important to consider the following:

- ***Personalization and Localization***

It's important to make the subject line personal. This usually involves including the recipient's first name. Localization also shows high rates of success if a relevant neighborhood, town, or region is present in the subject line.

- ***Word Count***

The rule-of-thumb for email subject line word counts 50 words or less. Keep in mind that many email providers have their own word count limit before they cut off your message. Keep the subject lines brief, yet captivating.

- ***Phrases to Avoid***

There are many phrases that indicate an email involves marketing or advertising, which will land it promptly in the spam folder. It's a best practice to avoid the following words in the subject line:

**Free   Percents   Reminder   Final   Special   Ends  
Soon   Quick Now   Hurry   Donate   Offer   Help**

## RECONSIDER USING IMAGES

One popular method of sidestepping the spam filter is to place all of the email content in an image with no text. Since the spam filter can't read the text inside the image, the email won't trigger a spam alert. However, spam software has now evolved and takes precautions against all-image emails. Here are a few pointers for using images in an email:

- If the email contains one large image and no text, it will be flagged as spam.
- Most businesses require users to choose to download images, so if the main message is within the image, they probably won't see it.
- All images receive an automatic higher spam rating.

## BE SMART ABOUT CONTENT

The best content strategies for avoiding the spam folder include text styles and link utilization.

- Fonts should be as consistent as possible in size, type, special characteristics (like bold or italic), and especially color. Any dramatic font shift will trigger a spam flag. This is amplified if there are several shifts within the text.
- You should use a limited amount of links in your email to avoid the spam folder. It's also best to link through descriptive text rather than a URL due to the common practice of "false URLs" leading to spam sites. As mentioned previously, due to issues with images, never attach your link to an image.

## **GIVE YOUR CUSTOMERS OPTIONS**

One of the best ways to ensure that a recipient doesn't flag your email as spam is to offer easy, reasonable opt in/out options. This means that the unsubscribe button is easy to find and doesn't require an overly-complicated process to click through. Another useful method is to offer double opt-in, which assures that your users are genuinely interested in receiving news and offers from campaigns. It's also important to send emails consistently enough that a subscriber doesn't forget that they've subscribed and later flag the email as spam.

## **ADAPT**

Unsurprisingly, spam software is becoming increasingly advanced as email marketers become better at avoiding its filters. It's important to understand that the best practices for avoiding a spam label will most likely change as anti-spam software progresses. Be sure to stay up-to-date through personal research or the advice of professionals, like the Stirista team.