3 Things to Know Before Cleaning Your Email List



Because validation is vital in generating fewer bouncebacks.

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Do you hear a lot of marketers saying that “email is king”? That’s because it really is. According to a 2018 study by Data Marketing & Analytics, 73 percent of consumers said they prefer to receive marketing messages via email. How do you make sure they *do* receive your emails, though?

If your bounce rates have been giving you trouble — remember, anything above 2 percent is worrisome — then you’re right about rushing to clean your email list. Letting an email validation system prune out the bad data you’ve acquired is one of the best ways to boost your delivery rates.

Not sure what an email validator is supposed to do? Let’s look at some of the most important features it should provide and see how you can maximize your gains.

1. An validation system should remove more than just invalid contacts.

As the Marketing Director at Image Source, Bruce Herwig runs email campaigns every week. He reached out to us after experiencing a very high bounce rate. “We knew that our list was questionable,” Bruce told me. “After a 19 percent bounce rate on our last campaign, we needed to do something.”

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All Bruce knew was that he wanted his campaigns to reach the inbox. “Removing invalid email addresses was top of mind,” he continued. But a good email validator has to do a lot more. If you’re in the market for one, make sure it also removes abuse emails, owned by people who label messages as spam; temporary emails, which auto-destroy in a short amount of time; spam traps, as their sole purpose is to block spammers; and role-based emails, which are monitored by groups of people, not individuals.

2. The system should offer you a real-time API.

Once you’ve cleaned your email list, you’re ready to start emailing again and give your campaigns a better chance to arrive in the inbox. But the truth is that data won’t stop decaying, and even the healthiest lists will go obsolete. Research shows this process happens at an average rate of 2.1

percent every month.

What can you do to prevent it? Use a real-time email validation API, or Application Programming Interface. Think of it as an intermediary that helps two applications talk to each other. In this case, the API allows the email validation system to communicate with whatever platform you use to collect email addresses. Thus, it gives the system the ability to check email addresses in real time, as they register, and ensure they are genuine.

So, once your list is accurate, you can keep it that way by installing the API on your signup forms. The API should automatically reject all the bad email addresses we talked about earlier and do a great job at maintaining your email hygiene.

3. A dependable email validator handles your data responsibly.

Before you commit to any contracts, data protection is an important topic to bring up with your email validation experts. As you lend your customers's information to a third party, how does that third party protect it? "Go with a vendor you trust on every level," advises Jordie van Rijn, email marketing expert and MarTech selection advisor. "This isn't a joke, because your email validation service will need access to the email addresses in your database in order to verify them. Make sure they're a big enough company that has been around a couple of years, and ask about the security measures they take."

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For starters, ask about the company's compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). But also, van Rijn

added, “If the vendor is a CSA certified email marketing sender and a member of the Direct Marketing Association, that’s a good indication you can trust it. Make sure you can use the tool easily and that they are nice, knowledgeable people.”

Some extra tips….

Knowing as much as possible about email validation helps you pick the right service easily. Here are a few other aspects to keep in mind as you start prospecting:

- Most companies offer free trials. Make the most of them! Test several systems until you find the most accurate.
- Some of them provide you with a free email validation tool, as well. You can use that if you have a small list and only want to verify a handful of addresses.
- Very few email validation services provide 24/7 customer support. Find one that does – it’s a nice perk and you won’t pay more.
- Also, see what platforms the service integrates with so you can easily import and export your list and save time.
- After you clean your database, consider scoring it. **Email scoring** tells you about your email-list quality by detecting how active your subscribers are. This way you’ll discover your best leads.

As we wrap this up, remember to prune your list often and never add anyone to it without permission. After all, your goal isn’t to collect as many email addresses as possible, but to engage with real people who want to hear from you.

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