



# Twitter Bulks Up on Best Practices to Increase Inbox Placement Rates by 100%

## Sender Score Improves by 40 Points, Assuring Long-Term Deliverability Success



Twitter is a communication network which enables people to stay connected in real-time through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing? Answers must be 140 characters or less and the service is unique because it works over several existing networks including SMS, Instant Message, the Web, and hundreds of other applications built on an open API.

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### Challenge

Since Twitter's launch in 2006, they have achieved phenomenal success with their shorthand version of communication, increasing the number of mail sent between users by over 20x in just one year.

However, they were experiencing a huge problem with their peer-initiated emails. For example, at Yahoo! 75% of their email ended up in the bulk folder or went missing. The situation was even worse at Hotmail where only 16.7% of their emails were actually delivered to the inbox. As Twitter relies on its "invite a friend to join" functionality to expand their subscriber base and create better relevancy for users, being junked by the two of the world's largest ISPs posed a major problem.

### Solution

Twitter enlisted Return Path's help to find out why their email was bulked and what they could do to get to the inbox. They signed up for Return Path's self service deliverability monitoring program where they started with a complete assessment of their overall delivery rates, delivery rates by IP Address, and delivery rates by domain. What they discovered was that complaint rates and infrastructure problems were giving them a bad reputation with a multitude of ISPs and wreaking havoc on their overall deliverability which averaged 70%. With a Sender Score of 30, it was no wonder why Hotmail, Yahoo! and a number of other second tier ISPs were rejecting their mail.

Return Path deliverability experts then prioritized the Twitter punch list so they could focus on fixing seemingly simple problems that were causing big road blocks:

- First on the list was adding a global unsubscribe. By making it easier for users to get off their list, Twitter was able to significantly reduce complaints that were triggering complaints at Yahoo!, Cablevision, Charter, Comcast, Cox, Earthlink, and Verizon.
- Once Twitter added the global unsubscribe, they were able to sign up for feedback loops at Microsoft and United Online. In addition they signed up for other available feedback loops which also allowed them to submit an application to the Yahoo! whitelist. The feedback loops provided them with data on who complained so that they could be removed from the list. They were also able to analyze the complaint data for information on which email messages and data sources were causing complaints.



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- Next, Twitter fixed some simple infrastructure problems that Return Path's audit revealed were causing complaints and negatively affecting deliverability rates at Hotmail. They implemented the list-unsubscribe header (used by Window's Live Hotmail) that gives subscribers a trusted unsubscribe button, providing another option for subscribers to remove themselves from the list rather than choosing the "this is junk" button as a default mechanism.
- Lastly, Twitter's peer-initiated emails (i.e., email sent from a Twitter member to other Twitter members) were failing authentication checks. This happens often with "forward to a friend" and similar types of email because there is a mismatch between the server sending the email (in this case, twitter.com) and the sender identified in the header (for example, myfriend@hotmail.com). The Return Path team instructed them on how to add a sender header to correctly identify the twitter.com domain and authenticate these emails. By making these relatively simple fixes to their headers, Twitter email was able to meet the requirements of many ISPs.

## Results

By reducing complaint rates and fixing these infrastructure issues, Twitter's Sender Score improved 40 points over the course of 30 days. With a Sender Score of 70, Twitter was able to achieve 100% deliverability at Windows Live Hotmail. They increased their deliverability to Yahoo! by 124% and raised their overall deliverability to all domains to an impressive 90% on average.

## Customer Feedback

"When we first started investigating our deliverability problem, we were more than a little overwhelmed and didn't know where to start or what was most important to ISPs. Return Path helped us identify and prioritize our key issues so that we could properly allocate our resources and move forward with a solid plan of action. The proof is clear: we are now getting near-perfect deliverability to Hotmail and have made significant improvements with Yahoo! Improving our overall average inbox placement rates to 90% has a huge impact on our business. Fixing our deliverability problems ended up being faster and easier than we had imagined."

—Jason Goldman, Director of Program Management

**Would you like help increasing your email delivery rates? Find out how Return Path's Sender Score can improve your email performance. Email [rpinfo@returnpath.net](mailto:rpinfo@returnpath.net) or call 1-866-362-4577 for more information.**

