



Zoho  
Campaigns

# All about IP reputation



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# Preface

This ebook focuses on **Internet Protocol (IP)** reputation and why it matters in the marketing world, especially in email deliverability.



## Chapter I

# What's an IP address?

A protocol is a set of rules, and an Internet Protocol is a set of rules that oversees the transmission and reception of data over the internet (or any network). It ensures the efficient movement of digital data across the internet, preventing congestion and disorder.

## IP address

Each device that's connected to a network is assigned a unique number called an IP address. It allows devices to locate and communicate with each other, similar to how postal addresses allow letters to be delivered to the correct house. IP addresses direct the internet to send data to the correct location. Your internet service provider (ISP) assigns an IP address to your device.

## IP address variations

IP addresses come in two variations: **IPv4** and **IPv6**. IPv4 was introduced first and was represented by a string of numbers separated by dots:

**192.168.1.1**

The numbers had a range from 0 to 255. Because there can only be a limited number of combinations (4.3 billion), IPv6 was introduced. IPv6 is a combination of letters and numbers in hexadecimal format. A sample IPv6 address looks like this:

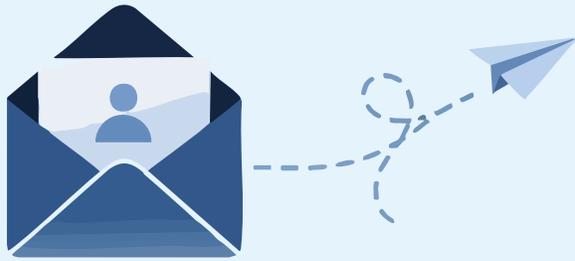
**2001:0db8:85a3:0000:0000:8a2e:0370:7334**

With this format, unlimited combinations for IP addresses are possible.

## Why is an IP address essential?

Without an IP address, your device can't access the internet. You wouldn't be able to download this ebook without an IP address.

When you type a URL in your browser, between pressing enter and the site loading, your device's IP address communicates with the website server's IP address and loads the page.



## Chapter II

# Understanding IP reputation

IP reputation is the reputation of your IP address among email clients or inbox providers like Google, Yahoo, and Outlook. It measures whether your IP is trustworthy and if your emails should land in the primary inbox or be flagged as spam. Each IP will have its own reputation, and there are tools available online for checking it.

If your IP address has a clean history, you won't be penalized, and emails sent from it have a high chance of landing in the primary inbox. But if it has a checkered past, the inbox providers will cause your emails to land in spam or block them. When this happens, reputation takes a severe hit, and the IP address can get blacklisted.

Any new IP address—or an old and unused IP address—will always have a low reputation. You need to build trust with inbox providers to increase your reputation, and it's a slow and steady process.

## Why IP reputation matters

Inbox providers and ISPs rely on reputation to make inbox decisions like placing your emails in the primary inbox, marking them as spam or junk, or blocking them.

If your IP address has an excellent reputation, it leads to better email deliverability. If it has a low reputation, inbox providers will be cautious. An IP that has a poor reputation will have its emails marked as spam or blocked by the inbox providers.

## Why is it useful?

Recipients are protected from receiving unnecessary and unsolicited emails, and their inbox isn't cluttered with useless content. The security aspect shouldn't be overlooked. Inbox providers protect their users from phishing, spoofing, and other cyber attacks that can compromise both the user's data and the inbox provider's reputation.

It's also a good starting point for marketers to achieve optimum email deliverability. Once you achieve a good IP reputation, you can operate your business without worrying too much about spam hits.



## Chapter III

# What factors negatively affect IP reputation?

There are things that you shouldn't do (whether with a new IP or a reputed one) so that your IP's reputation stays intact. Here are some common mistakes marketers make that give their IPs a bad reputation.

## 1. High bounce rates

If the email campaigns you send from your IP address suffer from frequent bounces due to incorrect or inaccurate email addresses and invalid domains, your IP's reputation will lower. High bounces mean you're not following proper mailing list hygiene.

Use an email service provider (ESP) like Zoho Campaigns to market your brand and be vigilant when adding contacts. If the contacts aren't double opted-in to receive marketing emails, if they were added from a random mailing list you purchased online (don't do this), and if you don't clear your mailing list to remove disengaged and inactive contacts, then your IP reputation gets affected.

## 2. Marked as spam

You should know to whom you're sending what. If your business has multiple departments, each has their own audience. No mix up should occur; you shouldn't send email campaigns intended for your audience in Australia to your audience in Japan.

That's a straightforward way of telling your audience in Japan to mark your campaigns as spam.

Higher spam rates will negatively affect the reputation of your IP, and it'll take a while to build back that reputation, so be sure to segment your mailing list based on country, habits, activity, and so on.

## 3. Caught by spam traps

Spam traps are specialized email addresses used for catching spammers. As a marketer, if you send campaigns to these addresses, you could be considered a spammer, which will have a big impact on your IP reputation.

You can genuinely be caught unaware, but it'll take considerable effort from your end to recover the lost reputation. The best way to avoid spam traps is to maintain list hygiene. You can learn more about spam traps on [our documentation page](#).

## 4. Missing authenticity

Since you'll be using your own domain for your website, your email address will, too. You have to show your audience that you're trustworthy, not a shady scam artist trying to con people. To maintain trust, you have to authenticate your domain by using domain authentication techniques like SPF, DKIM, and DMARC.

Don't send even a test email campaign until your domain is authenticated. Your IP reputation can take a hit if authentication is missing; it can lead to possible spoofing, reduced trust, and email rejection or filtering.

## 5. Doing sudden blasts

An email blast is a single email campaign sent in bulk to thousands of contacts. They're useful if you want the same content to reach your targeted audience; however, you have to warm up your IP address first. If it's a new or unused IP, inbox providers will get suspicious about the sudden spike in email traffic, and they'll prevent your emails from reaching your recipients. One way to warm up your IP is to divide your contacts into different batches and send campaigns. The batches option in Zoho Campaigns can help you do that.

## 6. Shared IP addresses

A shared IP address is used by multiple users. If one user resorts to spamming and phishing, the entire IP address will get affected, even if the others follow every best practice to the dot. If you're unsure about the other users on a shared IP, it's best to get a dedicated IP address. For example, Zoho Campaigns allows you to have a dedicated IP address for sending email campaigns.

## 7. Mistakes in content

You can still encounter problems with your IP reputation even after your campaigns get delivered to your recipients' primary inboxes. Low open rates, no interactions, high unsubscribe rates, and even high spam rates come from the content you type in your campaigns. The wrong content can grab the attention of inbox providers, and they'll mark it as spam. Some mistakes are:

- Using spammy words, too many emojis, and over-capitalization
- Adding urgency-inducing phrases can alert the spam filters
- Making inappropriate subject lines and omitting preheader text
- Not personalizing the main content according to the audience's taste
- Overusing too many bright colors

Zoho Campaigns has a huge array of pre-designed templates that don't feel overwhelming. There's also a dedicated template builder, and you can drag and drop the necessary elements on to the builder to create attractive templates.



## Chapter IV

# How to find an IP's reputation

IP reputation is calculated by various online tools based on factors including the history of your IP in the digital space, your ISP, your email sending practices, and other factors. Below are some tools that you can use to check your IP's reputation. We don't recommend a specific tool, so it's completely up to you to choose one that you're comfortable with.

### Google Postmaster Tools

[Google Postmaster](#) is a handy tool from Gmail that lets senders see how their emails are treated by the platform. Once you verify your domain, it provides insights like how often your emails get marked as spam, the trustworthiness of your sending domain and IP in Gmail's eyes, whether your emails pass essential identity checks, and the number of delivery or authentication errors you might encounter.

### Microsoft SDNS

[SDNS](#) is a service from Microsoft that allows senders to monitor how their IPs perform when sending emails to Outlook, Hotmail, Live, and other related mail services. After validation,

you can access information such as the volume of emails sent, whether users are marking your emails as junk, if your IP has triggered any spam traps, and how Microsoft's filters categorize your messages.

## The Spamhaus Project

[The Spamhaus Project](#) keeps extensive data on how safe or risky an IP or domain appears online. It gathers information from various sources and conducts expert investigations to score or flag domains and IPs linked to spam, malware, or other forms of abuse. The signals they look at include how the domain is utilized, its age, the infrastructure it employs, and whether it exhibits patterns typically associated with misuse.

## Barracuda

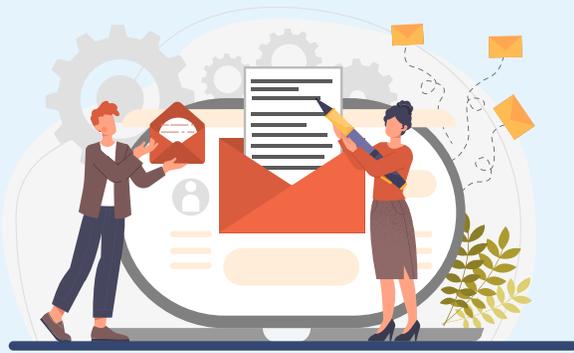
[Barracuda's](#) reputation service is a comprehensive database that tracks IPs known for either good or bad email sending practices. It relies on spam traps, feedback from its network, and detection systems to label IPs as poor if they send spam or show suspicious behavior. The system also provides a lookup and removal process if you manage to resolve any issues.

## Sender Score

[Sender Score](#) is a 0 to 100 reputation score that indicates how reputable your sending IP appears to most email providers. It's based on behavior metrics like complaints, the number of emails bouncing, how clean your recipient list is, and if your IP is found in blocklists. This allows you to compare your sending reputation against others so you can know if you're performing well or not.

## Talos Intelligence Tools

[Talos Intelligence](#) by Cisco also offers public tools and intelligence that show an IP address's performance in terms of risk and reputation. Querying Talos will indicate if your IP is good, neutral, or risky according to information they gather from email traffic, malware reports, network monitors, and more. Their reputation information is frequently updated and contains both web and email reputation.



## Chapter V

# 8 ways to improve your IP reputation

If you're using a new or unused IP, you can follow these points to improve your IP's reputation; however, you can't see results overnight when it comes to email deliverability. It's a slow and steady process that can take a few months as your recipients' inbox providers get used to your IP's email sending practices.

There's a lot of monitoring involved. As a marketer, you have to do your fair share of research and monitoring to be on the right side of inbox providers. If it's too overwhelming, it's better to have a dedicated resource since ensuring good email deliverability is an important part of any marketing business. There are many ways to enhance your reputation, but here are some of the commonly used ones.

## 1. Warm up

Warming up is a gradual process. You have to slowly increase the volume of emails you send without resorting to email blasts. Over time, your IP will start gaining reputation. An IP that hasn't warmed up can trigger spam filters, which leads to emails being flagged as spam.

## 2. Visuals

Watch what you attach in your campaigns.

- Avoid excessive use of blinding colors.
- Don't use explicit images.
- Don't attach images violating the [terms and conditions](#) of Zoho Campaigns.
- Make the content look more attractive and pleasant.

## 3. Different IPs for different purposes

It's better to have different IPs for different activities like marketing-related campaigns and business-related or transactional emails. Even if the reputation of IP that you use to send marketing campaigns gets affected, you can protect the IP reputation of your business emails. Plus, business and transactional emails only rarely get marked as spam.

## 4. Double opt-in and a way out

Following a double opt-in method will increase your IP reputation because you'll be sending marketing campaigns to people who actually want to receive them. This not only increases engagement but also ends up boosting your business as you steadily gather brand reputation among your audience.

Don't continue to send campaigns to uninterested

contacts. If they're uninterested, they'll try to unsubscribe. If they can't do that, their next natural step is to mark your campaigns as spam. It's mandatory that you provide a one-click unsubscribe option in your campaigns and make it clearly visible, according to [the CAN-SPAM act](#).

## 5. Look for dedicated IP addresses

A dedicated IP address is for you and only you. ESPs will have the option to provide you with a dedicated IP address if you need one, but it could come at a cost. For the peace of mind that comes with a stable, dedicated IP reputation, it's money well spent.

## 6. Regularly monitor

At least once per month, monitor your IP address to see if it's been blacklisted using online tools like [MxToolbox](#) and [WhatIsMyIP.com](#). If it's blacklisted, your reputation will take a hit. You can still recover, but you must act swiftly.

Immediately stop sending email campaigns from that IP and submit a delist request to the mailbox provider or anti-spam service that blacklisted it. It can take some time for the delist to happen, so we strongly recommend you resume sending campaigns only after you're certain that the IP has been delisted.

## 7. Get technical

Email deliverability involves technicalities, and domain authentication is one part of it. Even though it's domain authentication, it still impacts IP reputation. A domain can have multiple IP addresses. You must authenticate your domain with the ESP you use. Domain authentication is a vital lifeline for your marketing communication. Without it, your IP and domain can get blacklisted due to poor reputation, spam complaints, blocked emails by inbox providers, and other avoidable issues.

Authenticate your domain by publishing SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records. As a marketer, you should at least have a surface-level understanding of these. In Zoho Campaigns, [authenticating your domain is easy](#). You simply have to copy the SPF and DKIM records and paste them in your domain service provider's DNS. Once that's done, you can authenticate your domain.

## 8. Maintain mailing list hygiene

Contacts are the lifeline of any marketing business. Without them, you can't exist. Delicate care must be taken when bringing in contacts and maintaining your mailing list hygiene. To improve your IP reputation, you must:

- Ensure the contacts are double opted-in.
- Check the validity of their email addresses.
- Regularly check disengaged and inactive contacts and send them win-back campaigns.
  - If win-back campaigns don't work, remove them from your mailing list.
- Segment your contacts based on location, interests, activities, and various other factors.
- Once every six months, clean your mailing list by removing inactive contacts.
- Don't purchase mailing lists.



## Chapter VI

# Maintaining IP reputation

Your work isn't over when you've improved your IP reputation; maintaining it is just as important. Here are some practices to follow to keep a good IP reputation:

- Maintain mailing list hygiene by doing regular cleanups.
- Constantly monitor your IP address for any blacklists.
- Do some research on the latest trends and adapt your email sending approach.
- Make changes to your content based on new trends.
- React quickly to spam complaints and IP blacklists.
- If you've got a team, ensure everyone knows the basics of IP reputation, using the ESP, what to do when blacklisted, how to authenticate a domain, and other things that you think they need to know.
- Check your SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records so they're up to date.
- Get dedicated personnel for email deliverability if things get overwhelming.

# Recap

From maintaining mailing list hygiene to keeping up with blacklists, IP reputation is an ongoing process. You saw that Zoho Campaigns can help you in not only build but also maintain the IP reputation. Until next time, happy marketing!



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