Having Trouble with Spam filters stopping your emails?

Before diving into the complicated process of managing spam filters, keep in mind that up to 30% of all bulk email gets blocked. Still, you can take prudent steps to minimize the impact on your email. In this document, we've pulled some tips from across the web to help you send your email successfully.

SPAM FILTERS

The big email hosts (Yahoo, Microsoft, AOL, Google) have their own spam monitoring systems. They do not publish their anti-spam filters. The best defense against Gmail, Yahoo! or Microsoft blocking you is to get your readers to mark it as "not spam". For the rest of the world, there is a very common tool called SpamAssassin that is used by many ISP's to filter spam. You can look at the list of tests that the open source software tool SpamAssassin does on their site. http://spamassassin.apache.org/tests_3_3_x.html.

There are many email filters besides SpamAssassin in use, so if the email address is a corporate or government one, they may be behind a different email filter. Some of them may filter based on what we view as political criteria: "protecting" the reader from gay rights organizations is very common, for instance.

ASSEMBLING YOUR EMAIL

- Include the plain text version of your HTML email.
- Don't use all images or a giant graphic. Keep a balance between graphics and text.
- Check your language to avoid flagged spam phrases. "Click Here" can be one of them. Money is another. As organizers, we don't think we're writing about get rich schemes, but remember that organizations often write about mortgage fraud, and "Mortgage Rates" is on one list. This is an inexact science, but we recommend searching for "Spam Trigger Words" on the internet and you'll get lots of ideas.
- Put ALL your images on the PowerBase server.
- Reduce the size of your images to match the dimensions of the image that you are displaying.
- AVOID ALLCAPS.
- Don't paste your email in from Word as it will lard it up with extraneous HTML.
- Make sure your HTML is carefully designed. Avoid CSS styles as many email software clients ignore them anyway. Use inline styles.
- Make sure your readers can see how to opt out and respect their wishes. If not, you may end up on a list as email abusers.
- Avoid using a gmail.com email as your return address.
- Try very hard to add the recipient's name to the email, this helps to differentiate your bulk emails so that they are not identical which can be a flag in some systems.
- Subjects should align with email content. It may look to you that your subject is connected to the content, but remember an ignorant piece of code is going to make that judgment.
- Avoid adding attachments.

TEST YOUR EMAIL

- Sometimes you won't get your test emails because of the word TEST in the subject line. If so, make a small group of testers who review your email and send it to that group first. When it's ready, put the real target groups in the group list and send out the final email.
- Set up test email accounts on the major email servers. Add them to your PowerBase and put them in a test email group check to see if they get through.

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- You can test your email draft by sending it to isnotspam.com (http://isnotspam.com/) which will give you a rating of your email using SpamAssassin's system. If this email checking tool is not available, you can search for others on the Internet. Some are tied to proprietary email senders, but you still might be able to use them. If you do find that using isnotspam.com is helpful, you could make a contact with the email address for isnotspam.com in your PowerBase and then add the contact to your test group.