



How I went from less than 1% to 18%+ email open rates (In less than a month) | 1

I recently went through some turmoil in my business. This was due to issues getting my emails to land in inbox instead of spam folder.

However, I was able to recover and improve my open rates from 1% to 18%+ for broadcasts. I even saw 100% for autoresponder.

Here's the rundown of what happened and what I did to overcome this issue.

Stick around till the end, as I will share with you the lessons learned.

A little bit of a backstory, if interested

When I started this whole internet marketing gig, almost everybody I came across used and recommended Aweber.

So naturally, I went ahead and got me an Aweber account.

As I played with it, I realized it wasn't that easy to work with. Partially it is because I was new to this entire email marketing realm. But also because Aweber platform is not the most intuitive out there, at least it wasn't so to me.

Then I saw GetResponse ads and I was taken away by all the bells and whistles it has. Pricing was also another factor, which, for a newbie like myself, was an important factor.

I got a GR trial account and I fell in love with it

My subscriber base started growing. While open rates were always a concern for me, I thought that around 5% open rates are average in the Make Money Online (MMO) industry niche.



How I went from less than 1% to 18%+ email open rates (In less than a month) | 2

So I was happy to hover around 4%-6% open rates on my emails

The verge of the dip

Recently, I joined a program that teaches you how to grow your email lists to thousands of subscribers, while getting paid to do it, or at the very least, break-even

I don't know about you, but that tickled my fancy. So I jumped in and decided to make it work for me

I put in the hours, spent time creating the funnel, and got all the rotators setup and ready to go.

When it came time to sending traffic, the vendor recommended buying traffic from him, which would have made the referral some commissions.

While I didn't mind it, I thought the price was a bit too inflated only to cover the commissions so I wasn't too keen on getting traffic from him.

As I was scrolling through my Facebook account, I found a post by a friend recommending a free offer (aka lead magnet), which was a list of 10,000 emails!

That got me excited and I thought, this is it!

I followed the link, opted in, skipped the upsell and went straight to the download area and sure enough there was the list

With GetResponse, if you import contacts to your list, double opt-in is mandatory, so my thinking was if I were to go through the normal way of importing this list, I might not end up with enough volume



How I went from less than 1% to 18%+ email open rates (In less than a month) | 3

So I employed a “workaround”, it wasn’t exactly blackhat, let’s just say, it was greyhat, if that’s even a thing

So I ended up importing all those 10K emails into my GetResponse account, all with a single optin

“YAAAAAY”, I thought to myself ...

“Not so fast champ”, myself replied

I missed one incredibly important aspect, which is to watch the numbers!

As you can imagine, those emails are for people who, at best, bombarded with emails from random people like yours truly

Can you imagine for one second what that did to my deliverability rates?

And despite the fact that I was cleaning up un-opens on a daily basis, GetResponse took note of the huge and sudden drop in deliverability, so apparently, it decided to move my account to their “bad-boys” IP address!

Let’s talk about that for a minute, shall we?

From various discussions I had with marketer friends and based on my own observations, here’s the conclusion I came to:

Unlike Aweber, GetResponse doesn’t shutdown accounts for being “too spammy” or having deliverability issues.

Instead, they’ll move them to their “bad” IP address and continue to collect their monthly fees, until they drop on their own

So in other words, I was put in GR's jail sort of speak

Which meant even further reduction in deliverability, especially with Gmail, which makes 60%-70% of the overall number of emails used by people today, according to some studies

Eventually, I was seeing less than 1% open rates!

I even saw my own emails go to my spam folder in my Gmail account, which I use personally and subscribed with it to see my emails when I send them

Yikes!



As someone who relies heavily on email marketing, you can imagine what that was like, money-wise

Add to it the PayPal shutdown and the increasing pain in my pain, and the huge bills I keep paying both online and offline, at some point I felt like I hit rock bottom

That was an expression of course, I've seen a lot worse days in my life so I'd like to think

that I've developed some thick skin in the game

The Bounce

So in my effort to making a bounce, I talked to GR support. They told me that ISP's can sometimes flag emails that don't have great deliverability rates as spam. Gmail was among the toughest ones of those to inbox.

They also advised me to only send broadcasts to opens for some time to enhance my reputation as an email sender. They mentioned that I can then increase that by 20% each time I send another email

While that sounded like a sensible solution at the time, it was a difficult one to implement, especially since I know it would take me forever to improve my deliverability.

This meant losing money by not promoting any offers to my lists

Meanwhile, bills are piling up. Thanks to capitalism, nobody waits for you to "get up and dust off"

Simply put, that wasn't an option!

Obviously I couldn't just sit quiet and do nothing, so I thought, there must be a solution and I must do something about the misery I put myself in

The Gmail Experiment

While I felt crippled by not inboxing with the majority of my leads, I knew email marketing isn't the only channel of communication I have.



How I went from less than 1% to 18%+ email open rates (In less than a month) | 6

I still have my audience on Facebook. I'm friends with 5000 like-minded individual so there has to be a way out leveraging that power

So I jumped on Facebook and asked if anyone is willing to volunteer to help with a Gmail experiment I was planning to do

The response was nothing short of overwhelming...

Honestly speaking, I didn't expect to see that many responses, but I did get well over 100 people

What I did is I created a new list in GR and a landing page that explained what to do with a video

I asked people to sign up with their Gmail accounts, then go and whitelist my email so they can receive all future emails, which won't include any links but they will be pure value (more like email coaching series without any links)

I also encouraged them to not only open, but also reply when possible. I was thinking that by doing so, I'll enhance my reputation as an email marketer

Sure enough, pretty much everybody who signed up, found my welcome email in their spam folder and they were kind enough to reply and let me know about it

Attempt #1: Failed

None of the following days emails landed in their inbox, all of them went to spam, despite all the engagement and no links and even with all the replies and back-and-forth communication I was having with some of them

Then I decided to test the same list in Aweber and Sendlane, and the one that gets me the



How I went from less than 1% to 18%+ email open rates (In less than a month) | 7

best results will win my business

First I started with Aweber, I sent a test email to the same list and about 50% of them reported seeing it in their spam and the other 50% in the primary tab

Being the optimistic I'm, I thought that was a progress... but I wasn't 100% satisfied (obviously)

Attempt #2: Roadblocks

Next step was to test Sendlane, but that wasn't as smooth as I'd hoped

Sendlane is pretty strict with how they do things, which, while might sound a bit frustrating at first, is actually the exact thing that make them inbox emails easily

I had to "apply" by filling up a form to be able to import an existing list

After doing that, it was followed by a conversation by one of their reps over the phone, who asked me a few more questions to learn more about my business and how I do everything

Once all that was completed, I got the green light to go ahead and import, but only after I upgraded my account, not in the trial period, to which I cringed

However, I didn't have much of a choice so I decided I'll get me a month and see how things go from there so I did

When I imported that Gmail list, Sendlane's compliance team rejected it, because it was ISP-specific!

I was only allowed to import contacts one-by-one but not upload the entire list



How I went from less than 1% to 18%+ email open rates (In less than a month) | 8

So I decided I'll just upload 10 of those 67 gmail accounts I had

I then sent them an email and bam .. EVERYBODY .. yep, all the 10 of them, including my own Gmail accounts, confirmed that they received it in their primary tab

I knew I found a winner!

But my decision was not final yet.

I'll explain next why

The last test before leaving the lab

You see when I was shopping around for an autoresponder and educating myself about all the available options along the way, I came across the concept of using a third party SMTP service

Now you could of course use the SMTP's own software or use their API with software like Actionetics, which is part of ClickFunnels Etison (Full) suite

It just so happened that I was also taking a look at ClickFunnels to see if it's the right tool/affiliate offer for my business so I thought why not give it a go before putting it to bed?

I used SendGrid with Actionetics, because SendGrid is an affiliate friendly SMTP service

I uploaded all the 67 Gmail contacts and sent them a broadcast

Inbox = 100%!



Intersection

At that point, I was at that intersection...

Part of me wanted to continue with the SMTP route, which would give me more control over my business.

When using an external SMTP, if things go south, swap up the SMTP with another service, and the problem is solved.

That would be a much easier scenario than what I'm facing at the moment, where I find myself having to shift so many lists, contacts, forms and integrations elsewhere

While I was leaning a little more towards Actiontics+Sendgrid, when looking at the cost, Sendlane seemed like a more feasible option for the type of business I'm in

The issue was, Sendgrid charges you per email whereas Sendlane (and pretty much most if not all other third-party email marketing platforms) charges you per subscriber, regardless of how many lists and emails you send

This seems like a much better options because I need to clean my lists anyway, so I'll always keep my open rates high while focusing on the quality of the leads rather than the quantity

The Verdict

So I decided, Sendlane it is and here I am now, enjoying my 100% inboxing rate, my 11%-18% open rates for broadcasts and as high as 100% open rates for a welcome email to a buyers list!

Am I paying more? Yes, but that should, in theory at least, translate into more profits since

I'm now able to put my offer in front of more eyeballs so it's worth the extra investment

Take home lessons:

1. The quality of the traffic you fill your funnel and email marketing platform is paramount to your overall success, not only as an email marketer, but also as an internet marketer in general.
2. Easy-come-easy-go saying is apparently applicable when it comes to acquiring new email leads. Shortcuts won't get you anywhere
3. Even if you somehow were able to get access to huge lists of leads, don't upload them all at once, do it in chunks while keeping your eyes wide open watching the numbers too closely
4. [Sendlane](#) seems like an amazing autoresponder. Though more expensive than both Aweber and GetResponse, it's worth every penny in my opinion
5. GetResponse is also an amazing autoresponder for beginners. I also know many top marketers who use it and have nothing bad to say about them, you just need to be careful not to get on their bad side (aka IP address), because once you do, you'll probably never be able to fix it. I was told by their support team that getting a new account with them won't solve the problem
6. Aweber, while it might be the autoresponder of choice for the majority of the marketers out there, is not really my favorite. I heard some horror stories from my fellow marketers about losing their accounts without any prior notice (reminds me of the PayPal nightmare, so no thank you)
7. Finally, whichever autoresponder you use, make sure you do things right and play by the rules, that's the fastest way to keeping your business safe.

Now let's turn it over to you, have you ever had any experience with any autoresponders? What were they like? I would love to read your comments below