

Marks and Spencer optimises best-in-class email program with Return Path

Company Overview

Marks and Spencer is one of the UK's oldest and most loved retailers, specialising in high-quality food, wine, home goods, and clothing. This major retailer, founded in 1884, built its business on adhering to strong values of innovation, inspiration, and integrity. Consumers were drawn to the products that grew out of these ideals, and today Marks and Spencer has a loyal and supportive customer base that has fuelled the company's growth to 18 million registered users on its website [marksandspencer.com](https://www.marksandspencer.com).

Challenge

The company prides itself on sending carefully managed and curated messages to a very loyal and engaged subscriber base. M&S uses subscriber preference data to ensure they're sending subscribers meaningful communications that offer inspiration, exclusivity, and value. Many of the subscribers are members of their Sparks membership club. These subscribers look forward to a variety of member benefits, including personalised offers; events and experiences and priority access to sales. Fostering strong customer relationships—particularly with this customer group—depends on M&S's successful email program.

The personalised, relevant content they send is vital to retaining a loyal customer base and significantly contributes to driving traffic and revenue both online and in stores. With high creative standards and sophisticated data-driven campaigns, they wanted to ensure their messages were reaching their subscribers. Deliverability has always been a major priority for M&S, but as they embarked on expanding their email program to significantly increase their list size, they wanted to ensure their deliverability wouldn't suffer as a result.

Featured Quote

“With the Certification Program, Return Path showed us a route to be best-in-class for delivery. We've seen faster delivery and incremental gains in placement, which have led to significant improvements in all of our metrics, including fewer bounces and a 20% increase in open rates.”

- James Howe, Email Broadcast Manager

Solution

In an effort to ensure their campaigns always reach customers' inboxes M&S applied to Return Path's Certification program — an industry-leading whitelist that can help increase inbox placement at major mailbox providers. Inclusion in the program can significantly reduce filtering and throttling of email marketing campaigns and provides added benefits like unblocked images and active links in messages.

M&S's email program had a history of excellence, which made them well-qualified candidates for Return Path's Certification Program. Their high-quality email program already helped them

establish good delivery rates, but Return Path's Certification program helped them achieve near—perfect deliverability. Once they were accepted into Certification, they saw immediate results that maximised inbox placement. But most importantly, being Return Path Certified allowed M&S to increase their broadcast volumes with confidence.

Results

After becoming Return Path Certified, M&S saw positive changes in the overall performance of their campaigns across a range of KPIs. With Certification, their deliverability issues were almost immediately resolved with nearly a 100% inbox placement rate. Reaching nearly all of their subscribers in a timely fashion resulted in over 20% more opens. Furthermore, Certification helped cement M&S's reputation with mailbox providers and they saw their bounce rate drop by 86%. Reduced throttling at mailbox providers optimised M&S's delivery speed ensuring subscribers could take full advantage of limited-time offers sent to the inbox. The overall impact of implementing Certification led to 8% more click-throughs and higher engagement with their website, which ultimately resulted in more sales.

As M&S continues to send highly sophisticated and engaging campaigns to their subscribers, they are fully confident their campaigns will reach the inbox, thanks to the assurance Certification provides them.

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