

DMA's E-Mail Authentication Requirement

Effective February 1, 2006 the DMA Board of Directors approved a new ethics guideline requiring members – including nonprofits – to authenticate their outgoing e-mails. The guideline states: *“Marketers that use e-mail for communication and transaction purposes should adopt and use identification and authentication protocols.”*

What does authenticating e-mail mean, and why should your nonprofit organization care about it?

Basically, authenticating e-mail protects the integrity of senders' brands, and improves the likelihood that legitimate e-mail gets through to its intended recipient. E-mail authentication reduces spam and phishing attacks, thus making the electronic marketplace more secure. Your nonprofit organization, as well as commercial marketers, needs to make sure that messages are deliverable, and that consumers have confidence that your messages are actually from your organization's e-mail domain. As noted when the guideline was announced, it's a “win-win for everybody” to protect brands against illegal use.

How do you authenticate your e-mail?

E-mail authentication is easy to do, and there are several interoperable and inexpensive ways to do it. The two major types of e-mail authentication technology are IP-based and cryptographic, both of which have the same goal: to create a public record against which to validate e-mail messages so that the legitimacy of senders can be verified. Your organization's IT personnel or your e-mail service provider can easily and quickly create such a public record of your domain names.

A few additional notes:

Since the guideline went into effect, one of the main questions DMA has received concerns what e-mail messages should be authenticated.

Only your **outbound** e-mail needs to be authenticated. However, this includes **all outbound e-mail you send** (or that your service provider sends on your behalf), not just requests for donations. Confirmations of donations or purchases and any other e-mail communications should also be authenticated as an extra measure to ensure legitimacy to recipients.

Resources:

This brief article was not meant to give you a soup-to-nuts explanation or take you through the e-mail authentication process, but rather to inform you of the new guideline, and its benefits to your organization and the industry in general,

and to reassure you that implementation is easy and inexpensive. Much more information is available at www.the-dma.org/antispam, including a detailed FAQ and Best Practices document and a listing of DMA members who can help in your authentication efforts. Any questions can also be e-mailed to DMA at ethics@the-dma.org.



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