

DMA's Email Authentication Requirement

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

WHAT DOES AUTHENTICATING EMAIL MEAN, AND WHY SHOULD YOUR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION CARE ABOUT IT?

Basically, authenticating email protects the integrity of senders' brands, and improves the likelihood that legitimate email gets through to its intended recipient. Email 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 email 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 EMAIL?

Email authentication is easy to do, and there are several interoperable and inexpensive ways to do it. The two major types of email authentication technology are IP-based and cryptographic, both of which have the same goal: to create a public record against which to validate email messages so that the legitimacy of senders can be verified. Your organization's IT personnel or your email 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 email messages should be authenticated.

Only your **outbound** email needs to be authenticated. However, this includes **all outbound email you send** (or that your service provider sends on your behalf), not just requests for donations. Confirmations of donations or purchases and any other email 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 email authentication process, but rather to inform you of the importance of authentication and its benefits to your organization and the industry in general, and to reassure you that implementation is easy and inexpensive.

Find much more information on the [EEC's Email Authentication Guidance](#) page at thedma.org.

See also our [Email Authentication Guide Frequently Asked Questions](#) for members.

Questions? Email ethics@thedma.org.