Microsoft Troubleshooting

February 9th, 2024

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o Episodic vs Chronic Issues

o Microsoft Top Deliverability Factors
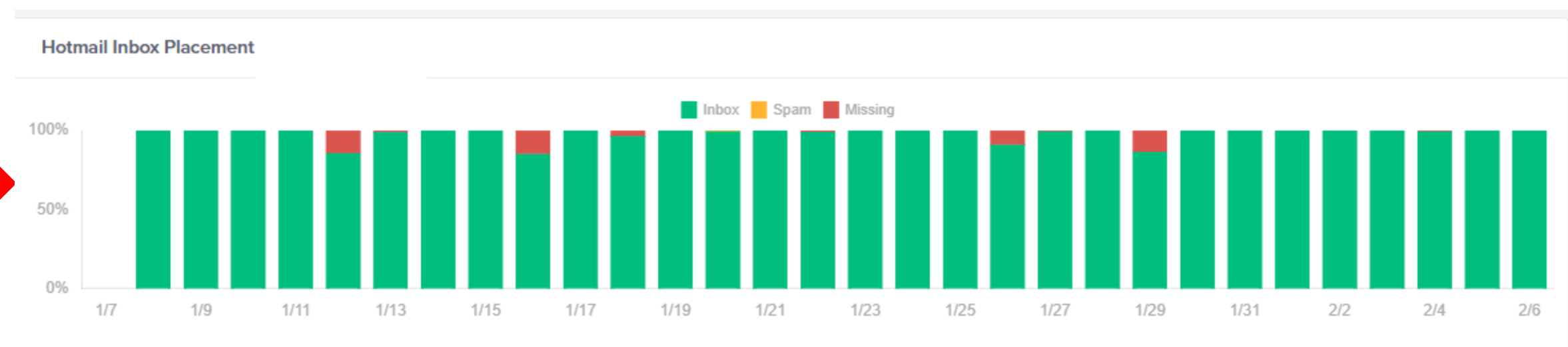
o Microsoft Troubleshooting

o Everest Insight

o Q&A

Episodic vs. Chronic Issues

# Episodic vs. Chronic Deliverability Issues

Episodic
- ✓ Occasional or one-off missing/spam rate increase.
- ✓ Occurring rarely.
- ✓ Does not necessarily represent a broad MS issue.
- ✓ <u>Addressed w/ client via AM, COE, CSM</u>

Chronic
- ✓ Frequent or repeated low IPR
- ✓ Ongoing.
- ✓ Represents a consistent MS issue with the email program
- ✓ <u>For AMs and COE: should be escalated for PS engagement</u>
  - When in doubt – reach out to PS!
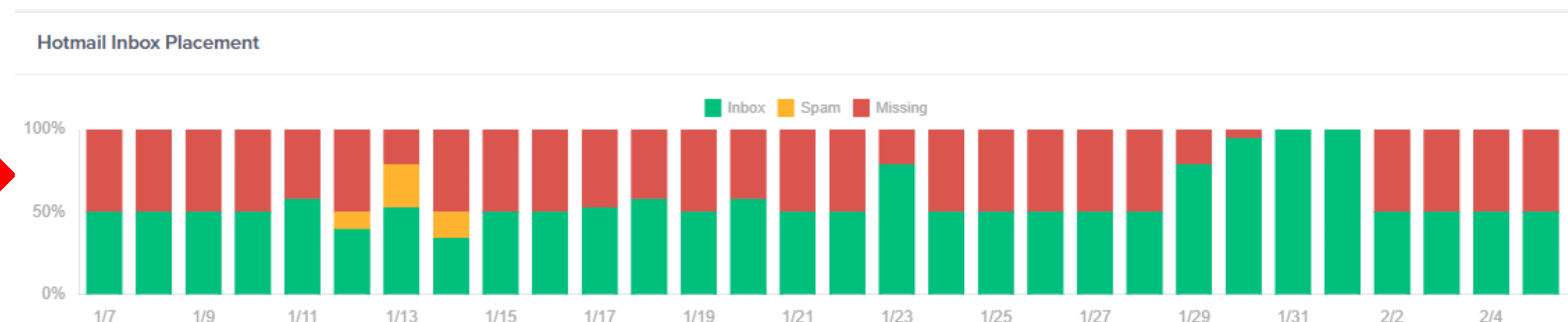
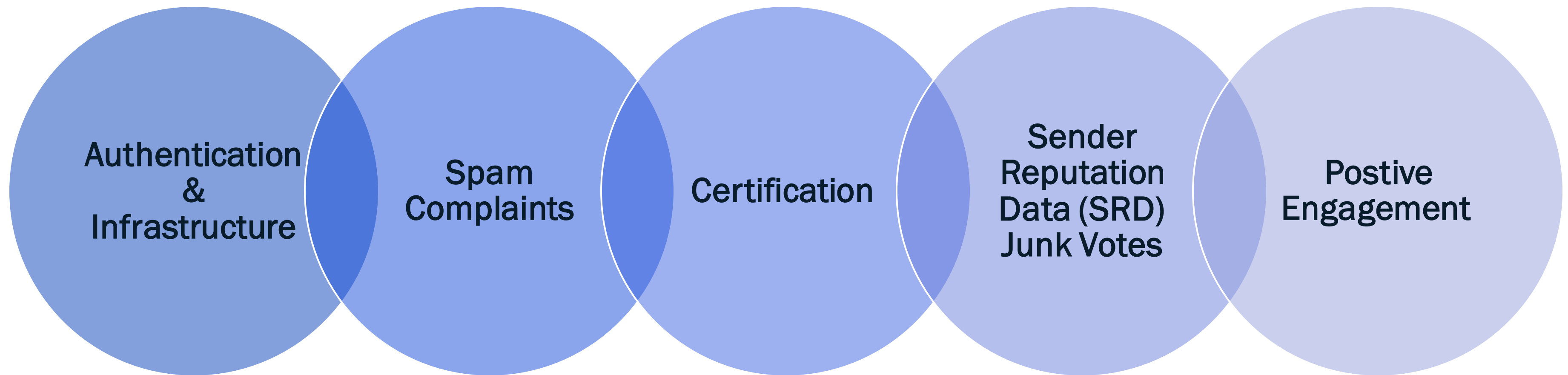# Reaching out to Professional Services

Email:
ProfessionalServices@validity.com

Slack:
#proserve-help

Microsoft's Top Deliverability Factors

Microsoft's Top Deliverability Factors

Authentication & Infrastructure

Spam Complaints

Certification

Sender Reputation Data (SRD) Junk Votes

Postive Engagement

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Authentication & Infrastructure

Authentication:

- Sender Policy Framework (SPF)
- Domainkeys Identified Mail (DKIM)
- Domain-based Message Authentication Reporting & Conformance (DMARC)

Ensure that there are no configuration errors in all authentication methods, or it could lead to messages sent to the spam folder.

Infrastructure:

- Valid reverse Domain Name System (DNS) records of your IP addresses are set up to point to your domain (PTR Record)
- Use the same domain for sending email and for hosting your public website.
- Use dedicated IPs.
- Do not open more than 500 simultaneous connections to Microsoft email servers. Send no more than 50 messages per connection.
  - Microsoft may adjust your connection and throughput based on your sending reputation. Monitor your SMTP error codes for deferral messages and adjust accordingly.

Spam Complaints

Spam complaints

A high complaint rate (<0.20%) can cause email to be filtered to the spam folder. It indicates to MS that a sender is emailing users who don't want their message and may signal that you are more likely a spammer.

Microsoft likes when subscribers rescue email from the junk folder if it is marked as spam. It is a strong signal to Microsoft that the messages are wanted and expected.
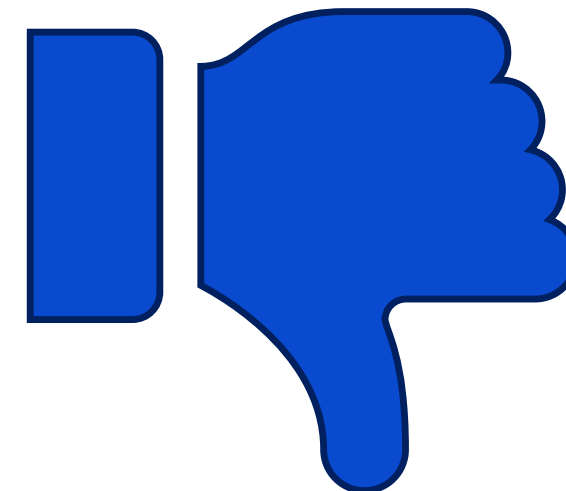
Sender Reputation Data (SRD) Junk Votes

Sender Reputation Data (SRD) is a unique email feedback system operated by Microsoft. The goal of the SRD program is to derive a better picture of a sender's reputation by using feedback from trusted voters, rather than using complaint rates, which can be misleading. To get feedback, Microsoft re-sends emails that had already been sent to subscribers on their panel of SRD voters within the previous 24 hours. The message comes from Microsoft Spam Fighters and the sender's original subject line with: [Microsoft Spam Fighters] Junk or Not?

In the SRD email body, subscribers vote on whether they think the email is junk or not junk. A junk vote is seen as negative feedback and a not junk vote is seen as positive. SRD feedback is more reliable than feedback derived from complaints because senders can lower complaints by sending more volume. Senders cannot artificially lower SRD rates.

Microsoft indicates that each SRD vote is typically representative of 50,000 to 100,000 Microsoft users. This means 5 negative votes represents at least 250,000 recipients.

SRD Junk Vote Thresholds - Certification

Validity Certification Individual IP Microsoft SRD compliance thresholds			
SRD Volume	0-4	5-10	11 or more
SRD Rate Threshold	Not enforced	5 Junk Votes	45%

Validity Certification Microsoft Group SRD compliance thresholds				
SRD Volume	0-9	10-30	31-50	51 or more
SRD Rate Threshold	Not enforced	75%	65%	55%

Validity's Sender Certification

Here's what Microsoft says about Sender Certification:

- *The industry's most recognized and valued email certification program.*

- *A third-party accreditation and reputation service used to "safe list" senders.*

- *Helps senders avoid the most common sender reputation pitfalls like complaints and spam traps*

- *Helps senders learn security best practices and keep sensitive data safe and your systems secured*

- *Helps senders get into more inboxes more quickly*

Certified Senders see higher inbox placement and have access to daily data provided directly from Microsoft.

Positive Engagement

Positive engagement includes subscriber actions like:

- Clicking links in your email
- Forwarding or replying to your email

Send relevant email to your subscribers so they interact with it regularly. When encountering deliverability issues at Microsoft, temporarily sending only to your most engaged subscribers (those who have engaged within the last 15 or 30 days) can help improve your sending reputation and lead to an increase in inbox placement. Microsoft uses engagement as a factor for filtering your email.

Subscribers who fail to positively engage with your email messages should be suppressed.

Microsoft Troubleshooting

Microsoft Sending Guidelines

- Sign up with Microsoft's Junk Mail Reporting Program (JMRP) and immediately suppress all complainers from receiving future emails.

- Sign up with Microsoft's Smart Network Data Services (SNDS) to help troubleshoot delivery and sending reputation problems.

- Validity Certified senders should monitor Sender Reputation Data (SRD) in Everest. SRD junk votes are weighted heavily in Microsoft's filter decisions.

- Encourage recipients to add your sending address to their safe senders list. Email addresses in the safe sender's list bypasses the SmartScreen filter and is delivered to the inbox.

- Set proper expectations about the content and frequency of your email. If possible, use a preference center.

SRD Junk Vote Troubleshooting

Ask the right questions!

- Did you experiment with or change your Friendly-From name? A leading reason why SRD voters mark an email as junk is when they don't recognize you as the sender.

- Did your sending frequency increase or change? How frequently are you contacting subscribers?

- Do you offer a subscriber email preference center?

- Do you process unsubscribe requests quickly? Requests should be honored immediately.

- Are you sending duplicate emails?

- Did you increase your sending volume recently?

- Has your branding changed recently? Is your branding consistent?

- Do you set expectations for email frequency and content type at point of signup?

- Are you acquiring subscribers organically and requiring express consent?

- Was an ad-hoc email sent to the entire list file?

Microsoft Bounce Errors

Bounces often require mitigation by Microsoft.
Microsoft New Support Request Form: https://olcsupport.office.com/

Questions to Ask:

- Are you seeing 4xx deferral messages from Microsoft?

- Have you reviewed Microsoft's SMTP error codes for additional information related to the deferral messages?

- Can you confirm the deferrals are not caused by unauthorized access to your IP address?

- Are you seeing non-delivery codes between 500 and 599 (non-delivery responses)?

- Are you immediately unsubscribing and suppressing email addresses that return an SMTP error code indicating the address is an unknown user or inactive account?

Microsoft Content & Brand Guidelines

- Do not use scripting languages in email design such as JavaScript.

- Always include valid, reputable URLs in your email content. Use the standard URL format. Avoid using IP addresses in the URL.

- Clearly brand email with a recognizable friendly-from address so that recipients can easily identify you.

- Avoid excessively urgent calls to action, such as Must sign up today!, Log in right now!, and Update immediately!. These are commonly used by spammers and could contribute to deliverability problems with Microsoft. Using urgency in your calls to action such as Buy now, Download our app, Start saving, Get your coupon, Learn more, and Shop now is a best practice, so try testing variations of your call-to-action to find out what resonates with your subscribers.

- Send messages no larger than 25MB.

Content & Branding

Questions to Ask:

- Have you recently changed your Friendly-From name?

- Have you recently changed your Friendly-From address?

- (Friendly From name <friendly from address>)

  - Jane Jones <jane@janesco.net>

  - ABC Company <service@abccompany.com>

- Did you use Java Script in your email design?

- Did you increase your email message size?
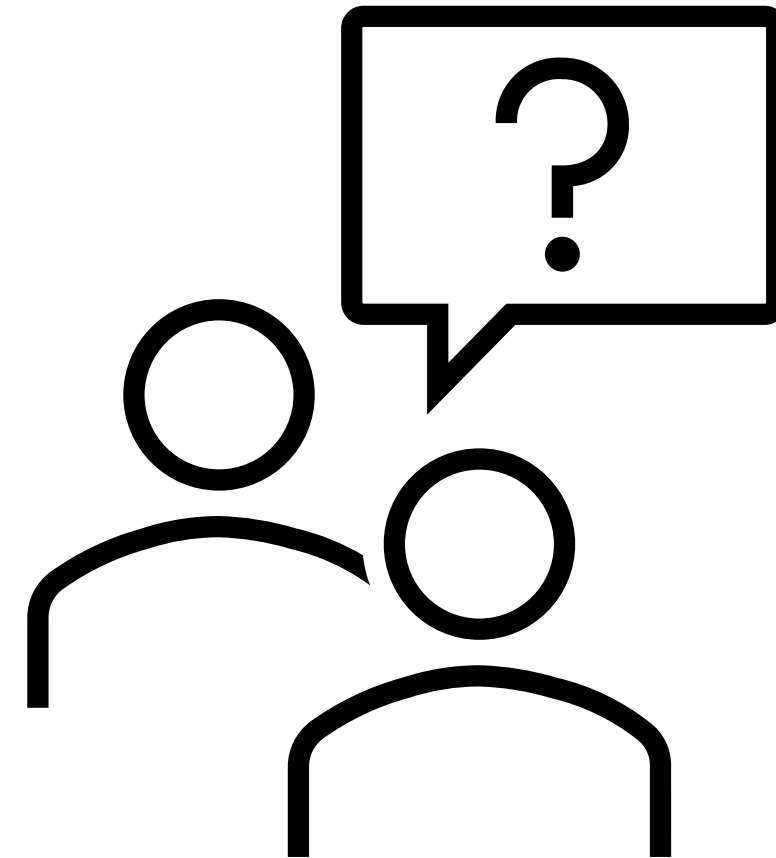
List Hygiene Best Practices

Opt-in

- Use opt-in permission methods. Don't assume a subscriber or customer wants to receive your email.

- You should verify each email address before adding them to your list; validate email addresses and leverage a Confirmed Opt-in acquisition method.

- Do not assume customers who purchased a product or signed up for a website are interested in receiving email; ask them specifically to opt-in.

- Set clear expectations up-front about email content and frequency.

- Do not auto-check the opt-in box on a web form.

- Do not purchase email addresses from a third-party.

Opt-out

- Include a prominent unsubscribe link in all emails and immediately honor all unsubscribe requests.

- Use the list-unsubscribe header with the mailto: option in all email streams.
    - If you do not use the mailto: option, Microsoft will give your subscribers an option to block your future email messages.
    - Using the mailto: option will give your subscriber an option to unsubscribe from your email instead of blocking you, and future messages will be placed in the spam folder. Be sure to immediately honor all unsubscribe requests once received.

- Unsubscribe unknown users after one bounce.

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List Hygiene

Questions to Ask:

- Do you require explicit opt-in, or do you auto-check the opt-in box on web forms?

- Do you purchase lists?

- Have you implemented the list-unsubscribe header with the mailto: option in all email streams?

- Do you unsubscribe unknown users after one bounce?

- Do you verify email addresses before adding them to your file?

- Do you use confirmed opt-in?

- How long does it take to process unsubscribes?

Warming IPs and Subscribers

- Warm up new IP addresses and domains and make sure to update your [Junk Email Reporting Program (JMRP)](#) account to receive complaint feedback.

- New IP addresses using the same Return-path domain inherits the domain reputation, which can help with the warmup process if you have a good domain reputation.

- [Notify Microsoft in advance](#) of any new IP warming activities.

- Send a welcome email to all new subscribers. It is best to trigger a welcome email to a new subscriber once they have opted in. However, if you send a bulk welcome message to multiple new subscribers at the same time, split up the send in small batches and send over a period of time instead of all at once.

- If you don't send a welcome message and just add new subscribers to your regular day-to-day marketing email stream, ensure that new Microsoft subscribers do not exceed 5% of the total Microsoft subscribers on any particular send.

Warming IPs & Subscribers

Questions to Ask:

- Did you recently increase your sending volume or frequency?

- Did you send from a new or inactive IP?

- Did you send to an inactive list of addresses?

- Is your spike in complaints tied to a specific campaign or audience?

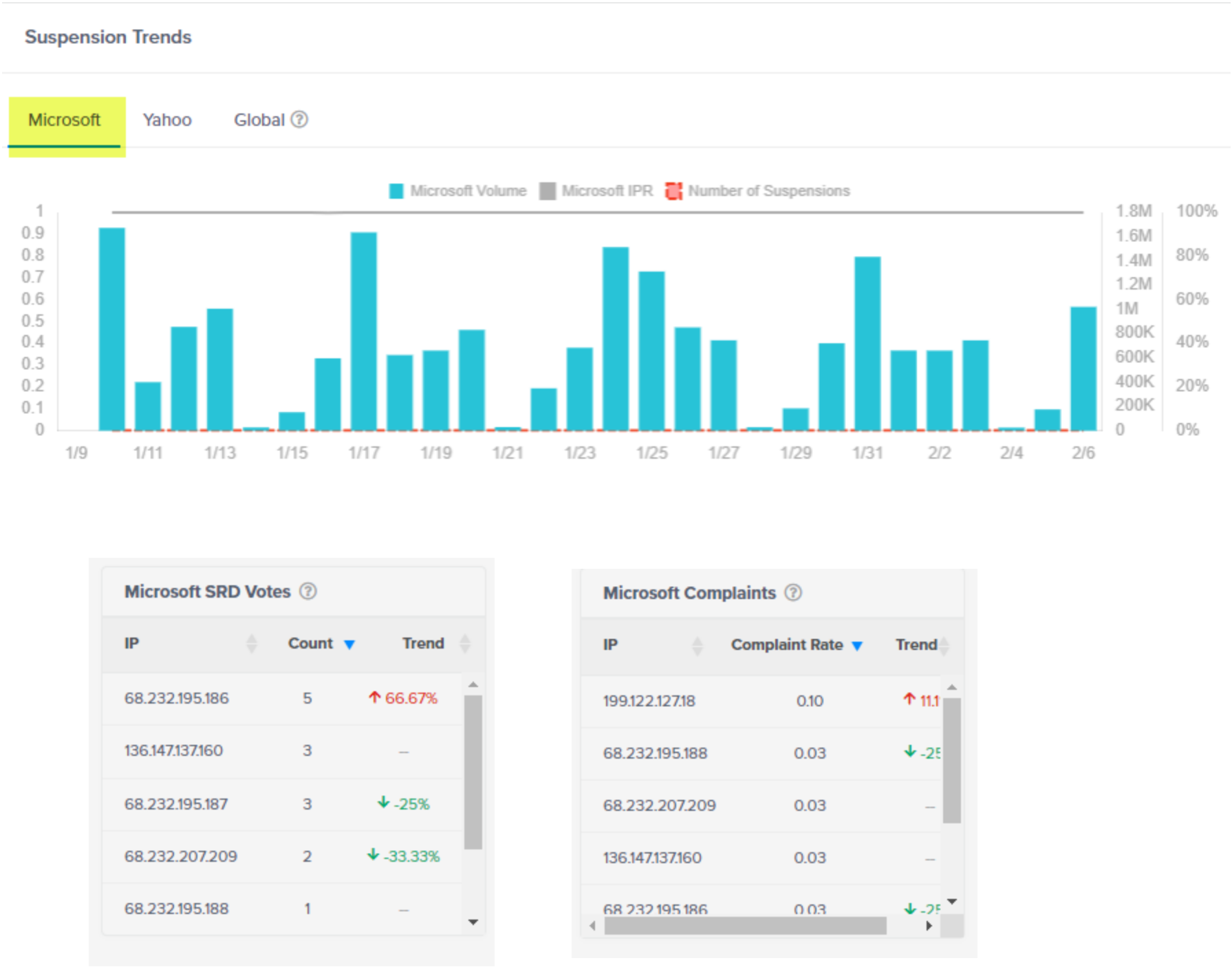- Are you sending from shared or dedicated IPs?

Everest Data

Certification Data Insight

Problematic campaigns contributing to MSFT spam complaints and (potentially) SRD Junk Votes can be found in Certification.

Certification Data Insight

Certification IP Status: 13.110.232.195

Trends   Problematic Campaigns

IP Filter

📅 01/09/2024 - 02/07/2024

Microsoft (809)   SRD (17)   ⬇ Export to CSV

Campaign	Date Sent	Complaints	Negative Impact ⑦	Time Frame
$115 OFF new Comprehensive Car Insurance online policies	12/7/2023	174	2.6%	12/9 - 2/5/2024
Last chance to turn $1^ into a Tesla (or $60,000 cash)!	12/16/2023	143	2.1%	12/16 - 2/5/2024
$125 OFF new Comprehensive Car Insurance online policies!	12/20/2023	122	1.8%	12/20 - 2/5/2024
nbn100 only $68.90/month for first 3 months - $78.90 thereafter	12/11/2023	122	1.8%	12/11 - 2/5/2024
Unboxing Day Sale: Kogan Smarterhome LX16 Robot Vacuum and Mop only $229 (St...	12/22/2023	114	1.7%	12/22 - 2/5/2024
Summer DIY for less - Trimmers, ladders & more all up to 40% OFF standard retail price!	12/12/2023	106	1.6%	12/12 - 2/5/2024
20% OFF Travel Insurance - hurry, limited time offer! ▵	1/17/2024	106	1.6%	1/17 - 2/5/2024
Garmin Fenix 7S Solar GPS Smart Sport Watch $829 (RRP: $1,349) & more smart deal...	12/10/2023	105	1.6%	12/10 - 2/5/2024
"Kogan 55" 4K Smart Roku TV only $419 + free shipping for Boxing Day!"	12/26/2023	104	1.5%	12/26 - 2/5/2024
Kogan Camera Drone only $49.99 (SRP $109.99) - Fly high at a clickin' low price!	12/11/2023	100	1.5%	12/11 - 2/5/2024

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Microsoft Smart Network Data Services (SNDS)

- Deliverability to Outlook.com is based on your reputation. The Outlook.com Smart Network Data Services (SNDS) gives you the data you need to understand and improve your reputation at Outlook.com.

- SNDS gives senders access to detailed data about individual IP reputation data, spam complaint rates, and more.

- The SNDS filter result gives you a percentage range of your email judged to be spam by Microsoft's spam filter during a given time frame. It does not tell you exactly how much of your email was sent to the spam folder because subscriber actions, settings and preferences can place your email in the inbox or spam folder. Microsoft uses a color-coding system (Green, Yellow, and Red) to symbolize how often your email received a spam verdict.

- The filter rendered a spam verdict on email from your IP:

  - Green: up to 10% of the time

  - Yellow: between 10% and 90% of the time

  - Red: more than 90% of the time

Result	Example	Verdict percentage
Green		Spam < 10%
Yellow		10% < spam < 90%
Red		Spam > 90%

- Green is the desired result for all senders when using SNDS since it says that most or all of your email does not receive a spam verdict by Microsoft's spam filter.

- The filter results may also change on a daily basis if Microsoft renders a spam verdict on a higher percentage of your email due to excessive complaints or other factors.
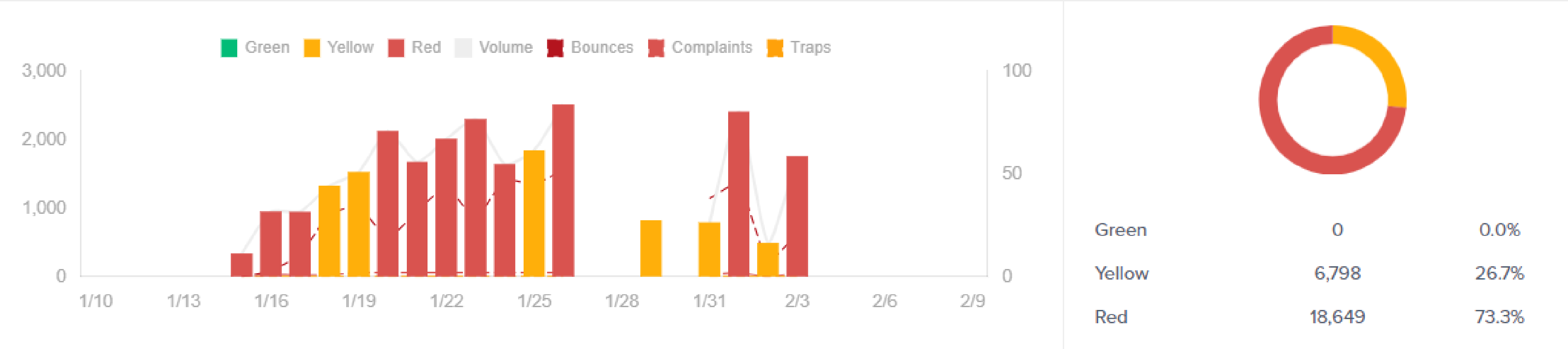
Encourage clients to integrate SNDS data within Everest to help troubleshoot deliverability and reputation problems at Microsoft.

SNDS Data in Everest

Everest's SNDS integration includes data that can help senders pinpoint segments or campaigns causing deliverability issues. It shows:
- Daily reputation rates
- IP specific bounce and complaint rates
- Errors and IP issues

Microsoft SNDS Trend

Legend: Green, Yellow, Red, Volume, Bounces, Complaints, Traps

Green	0	0.0%
Yellow	6,798	26.7%
Red	18,649	73.3%

IP Performance

IP	Volume	Filter Results	Bounces	Complaints	Traps
185.71.124.35	25,447		1.9%	< 0.1%	0.0%

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Q&A