SMART IP WARMING

The First Stride of Email Deliverability

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INTRODUCTION

Warm-up, as we all know, is a gradual increase in the intensity of physical activity to warm the muscles and reduce the risk of injury. Likewise, IP warming is the process of gradual, systematic, weekly addition of campaign volume in the new IP address. Doing so help in establishing a positive sending reputation with Internet Service Providers (ISPs). This becomes particularly important in case you have a dedicated IP.

Trust cannot be earned overnight. Same applies to ISPs that ensure the quality of emails that customers receive. Typically, ISPs bank on the email marketers to deliver relevant messages to their subscribers. In case they cannot trust you for the same, your emails might end up in the spam folder.

While it generally takes around 4-8 weeks to accomplish maximum deliverability rate, it could take more time if the mailbox providers see that the recipient does not want the email. Some of the mailbox providers limit the number of emails to be delivered each day before they have not established a credible reputation. Therefore, it is imperative to warm up the new IP and ensure that your emails are delivered in the subscriber's inbox.

That said, let's try to get the hang of IP warming and understand how to make the most out of it with 5 easy steps.

STEPS OF IP WARMING

01

Strictly follow all the email deliverability best practices before sending the first lot of emails for IP warming

- To ensure an adequate deliverability rate, every email you send from the new IP should be authenticated with DomainKeys Identified Mail.
- You must use the new IP to update the Sender Policy Framework (SPF) record. Verify that the IP is not set up as an open relay with the help of your Email Service Provider or email administrator.

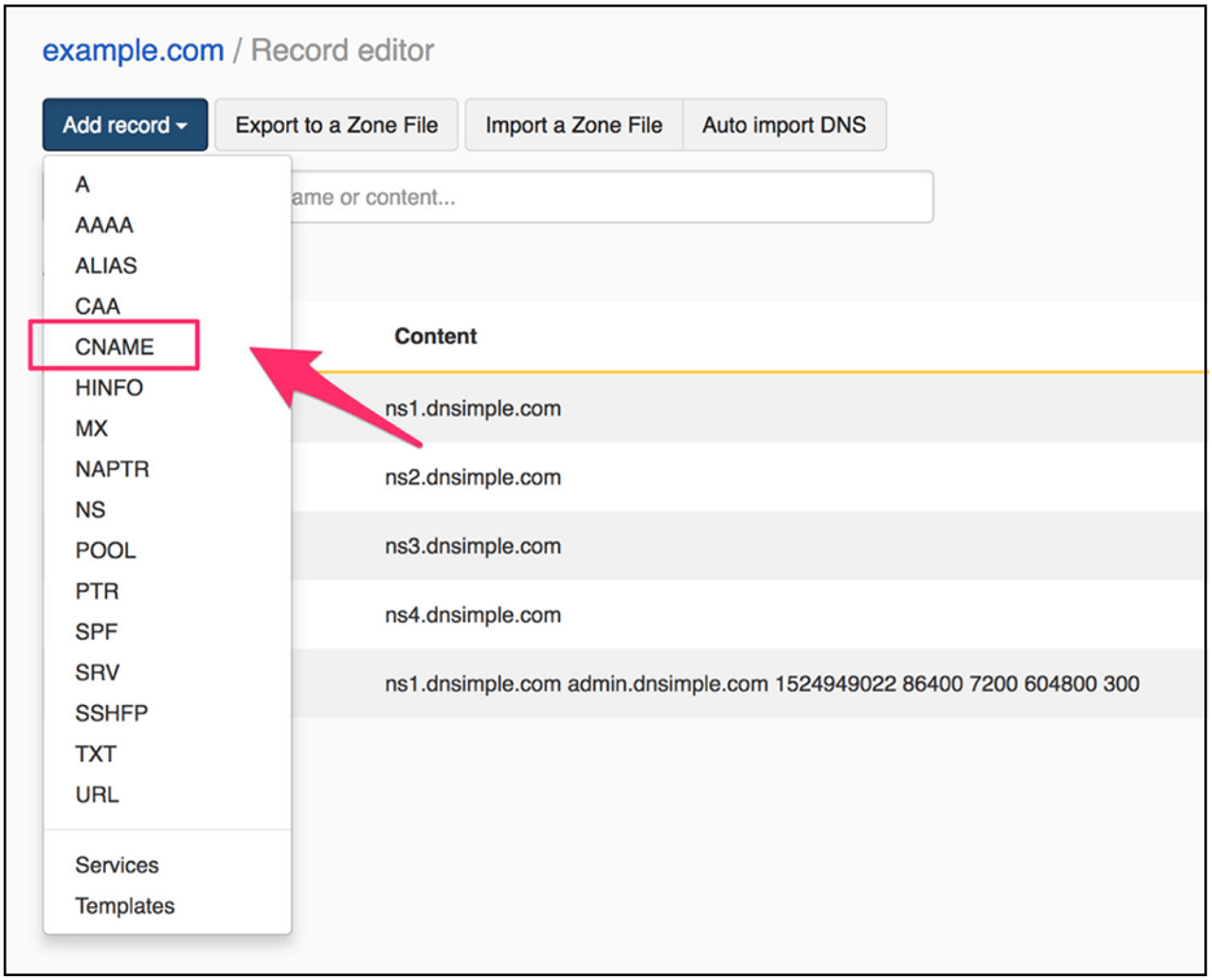
02

Your dedicated IP should have a pointer record set up in your reverse DNS (Domain Name System)

In other words, map the host name to your IP addresses with the help of CNAME and A records.

CNAME (Canonical Name) record is used to alias one name to another. For instance: email.uplers.com and www.email.uplers.com point to the same application and are hosted by the same server. In order to make sure that it does not create two different records, A record and CNAME record comes into picture.

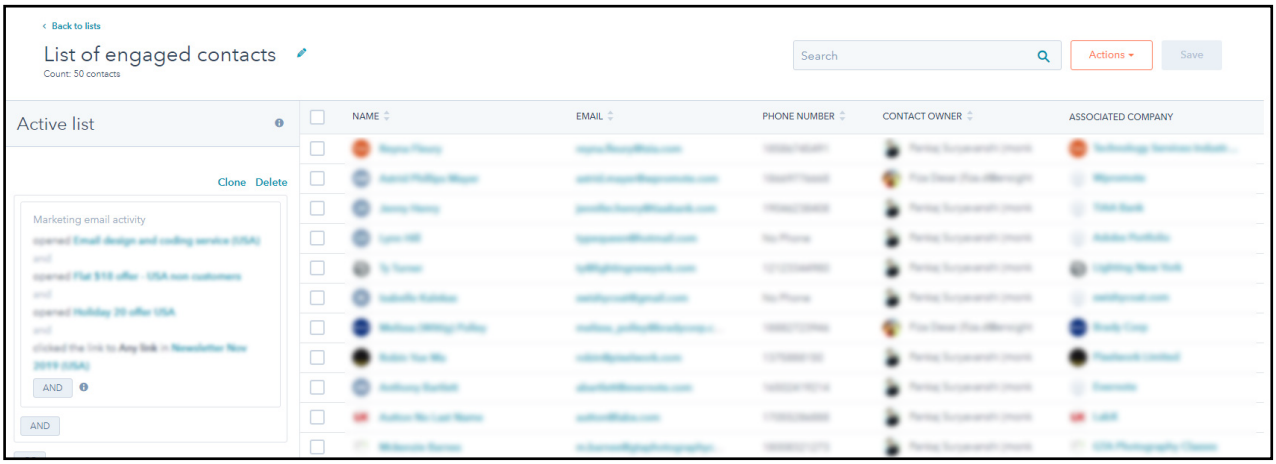
An A record is used for email.uplers.com pointing to the server IP address, while CNAME record is used for www.email.uplers.com that points to email.uplers.com. If your IP address changes, you have to update it in one place only. Simply edit the A record for email.uplers.com and the changes will be incorporated automatically.



03

Segment the email subscribers based on their engagement with your previous emails

You should start off by sending relevant emails to the most active subscribers. It is natural to assume that you should not mail them first as they are your most engaged subscribers and it would hamper your deliverability. However, you can decrease your IP warm up time by several weeks if you follow this tactic. Choose your segments wisely so that the ISP does not block your IP. Send smaller email blasts to most accurate lists and most engaged subscribers so that there are no blocking issues.



04

The key to successful IP warming is gradually increasing the number of emails you send

An acceptable schedule looks something like this:

Week 1	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Daily Volume	50	100	200	400	800	2000

If you are sending 50 emails on the first day, send 100 emails on the second day, and so on.

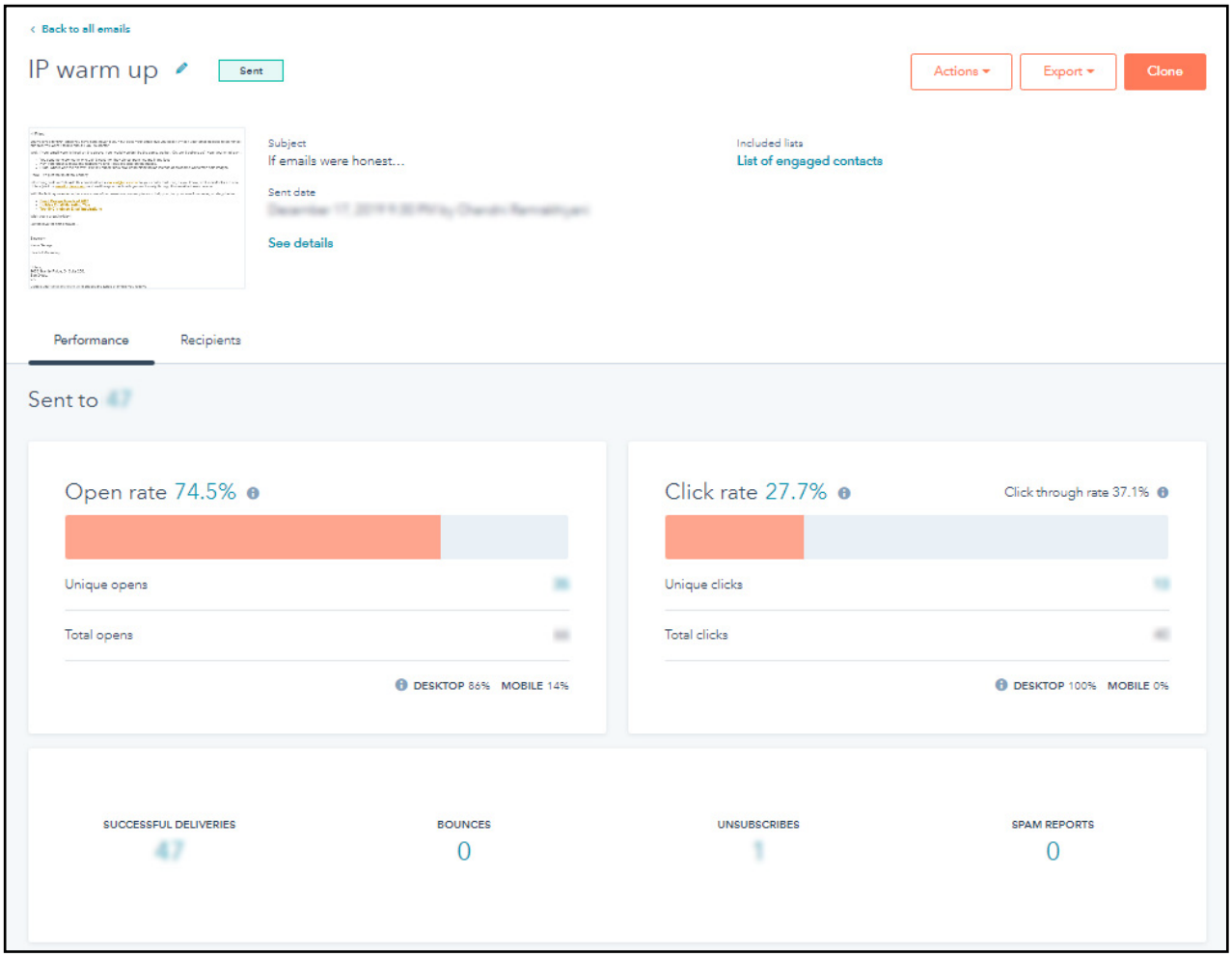
- Businesses that have more than 5 million subscribers should not send more than double the previous volume.
- During the first six weeks, avoid sending to subscribers who have not opened or clicked in the last 90 days.

05

Carry out the post-send hygiene

Monitoring the email metrics is of paramount importance so that you can revise the warm up strategy, if needed. Keep a close eye on the delivery rate, bounce rate, open rate, click-through rate, and spam rate to measure the success of your campaigns. While warming your IP, it is important to maintain an open rate above 20% at least.

Have your bounce processing in place and remove the unknown users or invalid emails after one bounce. For safe unsubscribes, you must have the List-Unsubscribe header to your email headers.



IP WARMING FOR TRANSACTIONAL EMAILS

Transactional emails are typically well received by the email filters. While sending transactional emails, most brands have different teams or individuals handling them —whether it is purchase receipts, shipping confirmations, account updates, order delivery notifications, or password reset emails. As these emails are sent out in spread out intervals, they do not need a specific warmup mechanism as such. However, you can take help of adjustable throttling feature offered by certain ESPs (like SendGrid).

AUTOMATED IP WARMING

IP warming can get quite cumbersome, especially if you have a long list of subscribers. To make things easy for the marketers, ESPs like SparkPost and SendGrid allow their clients to set up automated IP warming. It will automatically throttle the traffic sent from your new IP according to the warmup schedule. This comes handy when you have multiple IPs to warm at the same time.

Classic Cases when you can use Automated IP Warming

Automated IP warming can be quite helpful in the scenarios discussed below:

1. When you have a new or newly upgraded account with a single dedicated IP, you can use automated IP warming facility to ensure optimum deliverability rate.

2. If you follow a consistent schedule for sending your emails, automated IP warming can be the safest bet for you. Sporadic email sends would not go well with automatic IP warming technique.

3. Several brands have large IP pools with a number of dedicated IPs that are segmented to suit their business workflow. In case you are adding a new IP to the current IP pool, you can avail automated IP warming services.

4. If you already have warm IPs and are looking forward to building a new pool, you can employ automated IP warming process for those cold IPs.

According to SendGrid, IP allocation is an important aspect to be considered while warming it.

The first column represents the IP allocation, based on the number of emails to be sent everyday. In the second column, SendGrid has suggested the daily volume of emails to be sent each day while warming the IP.

IP Allocation

How many IPs should I have?
(Suggested IP count based on desired daily sending volume)

No. of IPs	Target daily volume
2	25,000
2	50,000
2	100,000
2	200,000
2	400,000
2	800,000
3	1,600,000
3	2,500,000
4	3,500,000
5	5,000,000
7	7,500,000
10	10,000,000
11	12,500,000
12	15,000,000
13	20,000,000
15	30,000,000
17	50,000,000
20	80,000,000

The number of IPs needed to accommodate your sending volume can change based on your type of sending, the domains to which you are sending, and your sending reputation.

IP Warmup Schedule

Sending volume ramp up schedule
(Regardless of IP count)

Day	Daily volume
1	50
2	100
3	500
4	1,000
5	5,000
6	10,000
7	20,000
8	40,000
9	70,000
10	100,000
11	150,000
12	250,000
13	400,000
14	600,000
15	1,000,000
16	2,000,000
17	4,000,000
18	Double Sending Volume Daily

Ideal warm up schedules can vary greatly depending on a number of factors including: list hygiene, spam reports, user engagement, domain reputation, content, domain distribution, and other factors.

For marketers using this ESP, just go to IP Addresses from the Settings menu. Click the action menu for the IP you want to warm-up.

It will redirect you to the dedicated IP Address screen. From there, you need to select “Use Automated IP Warmup”.

Next, save the Edit Your Dedicated IP Address screen.

Alternatively, you can execute IP warming with the help of their Automated Warmup API, which automatically throttles the traffic according to their warm-up schedule displayed in the table above. If the email requests surpass the hourly limit, they will be added to other existing warm IPs existing on your account.

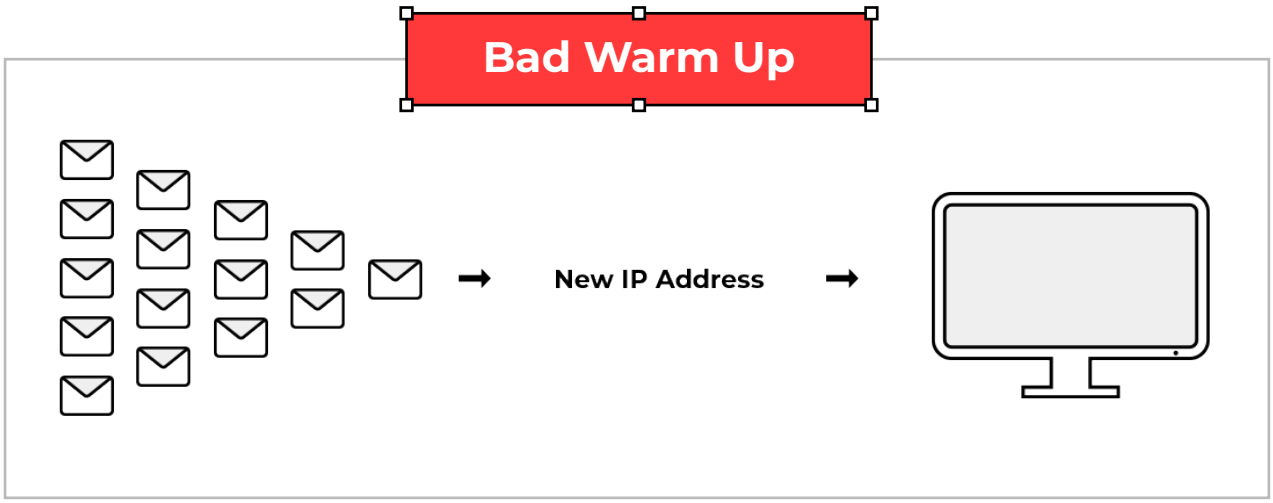
SOME IP WARMING ISSUES YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT

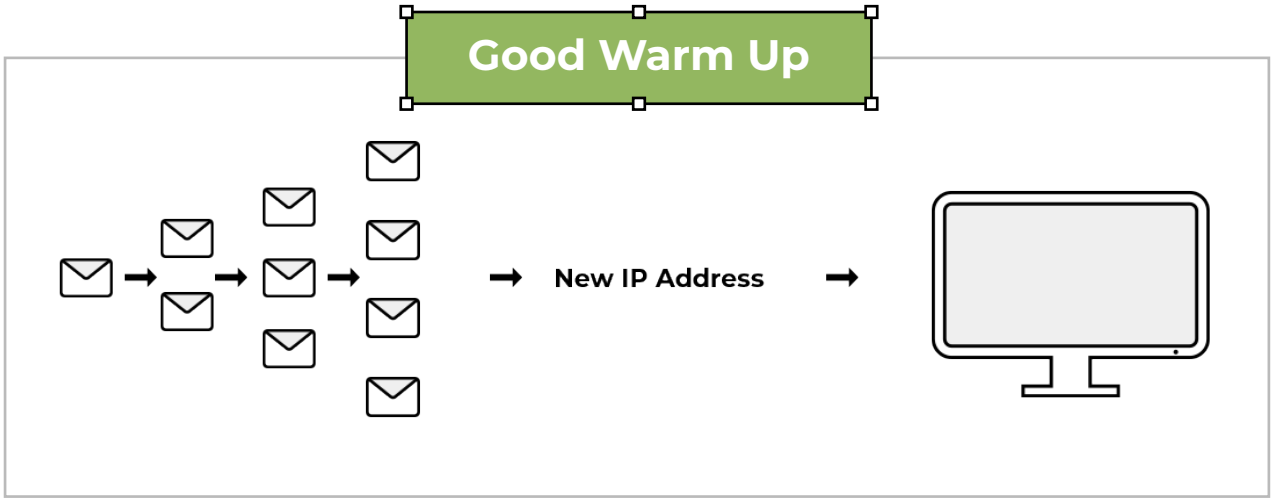
- Yahoo, AOL, and Gmail present some bulking issues by dividing emails into discrete bulks, thereby delaying the email delivery. They will get resolved once you send some emails promising positive metrics.

- Delays are normal with AOL, Microsoft, and Comcast. These delays or 421 bounces will retry for 72 hours. If not delivered after that time, they will bounce as a 5XX and the bounce record will be saved as 421 error. Once you build a reputation, there won't be any further delays.

SUMMING IT UP

The difference between a bad warm-up and good warm-up would look something like this.





We strongly recommend that you follow the strategies discussed above to warm up your IP and establish a positive sender reputation across every ISP. That's how it will create the perfect scaffold to impart highly personalized and targeted experience to your email subscribers, ultimately enhancing your email marketing performance.

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email

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