ASP Certification Requirements

Return Path
FROM VALIDITY

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Introducing Certification

Validity for Email - ASP Certification is the industry's best sending practices program that combines exclusive data and insight into your inbox placement with benefits directly from mailbox providers to get more emails delivered, reach more recipients, and increase revenue.

An ASP contracted to send transactional emails on behalf of third-party companies is the responsible party for Certification purposes. The ASP is ultimately accountable for any action or activity, including of or by the ASP's clients, which results in suspension or termination of Certification benefits. This includes but is not limited to IP and domain Blocklistings, email content, etc.

Become Certified

Our ASP Certification program is designed for best-in-class senders that meet top mailbox providers' and recipients' expectations and follow industry-standard best practices. Throughout the ASP Certification process we will work together to ensure your program fulfills our requirements.

Here are the key steps to becoming Certified:

1. At the beginning of the ASP Certification process, we conduct a comprehensive audit of your email program to ensure it meets all the requirements detailed below.

2. During the audit, we will notify you if any parts of your email program do not meet our requirements and provide you with additional information on changes necessary and how to complete them. In order to continue the audit, you will need to complete any updates within 30 days of our request.

3. Once you make the appropriate changes, we finalize your audit and send you an account activation email.

4. After becoming Certified with our ASP program, your IPs will begin receiving benefits at Microsoft, Yahoo!, and other global mailbox and email security providers.

Stay Certified

As an ASP Certified sender, you're required to consistently meet the ASP Certification requirements used to evaluate your program during the audit. Meeting the requirements on a consistent basis ensures you receive the program's full deliverability benefits. Periodic wellness checks are conducted to protect the ASP Certification program and to ensure your email program is still meeting our requirements.

- A measurable inbox placement increase at mailbox providers like Microsoft, Yahoo!, and more, including during the crucial holiday season when mailbox providers often throttle and filter high-volume senders.

- Exclusive data feeds from mailbox providers delivering detailed information about your KPIs, placement, and Certification performance.

- A compliance team dedicated to 24/7 monitoring, providing you with security alerts and working with you through the resolution of any compromises.

We understand that issues happen and you may fall out of compliance. If this happens once in a while, it may result in a temporary [suspension](#) from the program while you get back on track. However, if you repeatedly or egregiously violate the requirements, we will notify you and work with you to make any necessary updates. We also reserve the right to remove you from the program if necessary.

Application Service Provider Certification Requirements Overview

To become and stay Certified, you will need to meet the requirements of the ASP Certification program. These requirements are based on best practice guidance established in partnership with our mailbox provider partners.

Breaking Down the Requirements

- **Business Model:** Be transparent about who you are and what you do.
- **Measurability:** Send email in volumes and at frequencies that appeal to your recipients.
- **Infrastructure:** Properly send, authenticate, and manage email.
- **Email Message Content:** Present yourself distinctly and accurately to your recipients.
- **Privacy Policy:** Document all the details of your email program.
- **Legality:** Adhere to any applicable spam and data privacy laws that impact you and your recipients.
- **Security:** Show how you take care of your systems and recipients' data.
- **Feedback Loops (FBLs):** Use feedback to keep a clean, healthy list of recipients.
- **Communication:** Communicate clearly and openly with Validity.

- **Performance and Compliance:** Demonstrate your email program stays within thresholds established by mailbox providers and recipients.

Part 1: Business Model

Your business model gives us important information about your overall email program and helps us determine if you're a good fit for ASP Certification. Here are the requirements your business model must meet to become and stay ASP Certified:

1. **Business Registration**
   - Your business is verifiable by a public third-party source through a legitimate online website, such as a country registry, or an application such as Dun & Bradstreet.
   - Your business registration includes your business's current physical address.
   - Your business has been operational and legally registered for at least one year.
   - Your business does not use a registered agent to obscure any of your business's information.

2. **Website**
   - Your website(s) use Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS).
   - The root domain of all sending domains associated with your Certified IP(s) must lead to a valid, operable website clearly identifying you or your ASP client.
     - ◆ **Note:** A redirect to a valid, operable website clearly identifying you or your ASP client is sufficient.

3. **IP Addresses and Content**
   - Certified IP addresses must be dedicated to you, the ASP.
   - Certified IPs can only send transactional email as defined below.
     - o **Action Validation:** Automated, real-time messages sent to users after a specific action is performed. This type of email validates an action a user has taken; therefore, focuses on the information pertinent to that user's action. Examples include account creation confirmations, double-opt in verification or confirmation emails, password reset requests, and order confirmations.
     - o **Obligatory Notifications:** Involuntary notifications required to be sent by law or regulation and advise or alert users about essential information. Examples include legal advisories, security alert notifications, recall announcements, and privacy policy

notices.

- o **Transaction Completion:** Messages directly related to a recent transaction's life cycle. These emails provide a customer with necessary information about the status of a recent transaction. Examples include shipping confirmations, invoices, payment notifications, and surveys.
    - ◆ **Note:** Surveys are only Certifiable if they are intended to complete a recent transaction's life cycle, typically defined as within 30 days of the event for which the survey applies. Surveys cannot be company-generic and must be directly related to a specific, recent transaction that has taken place.
- Certified IPs must send templated, clearly branded emails. They cannot send free-form content such as web forms or open text boxes.
    - o This means you cannot use Certified IPs to send corporate email, which often includes internal communications between co-workers or customer support emails.

IMPORTANT: We will not certify IP addresses if your business fits into one of the following categories:

Market Research & Survey Companies	Companies performing research on behalf of others in order to test the interest, opinion of or to obtain feedback from target audiences or consumers.
Aggregators	Companies collecting various pieces of information from third parties and combine the content into single mailings.
Email Service Providers (ESPs), Agencies, Third-party Mailers, etc.	Companies sending promotional mailing on behalf of brands they do not fully own. Including, but not limited to, ESPs, Marketing Agencies, White-Labels, Affiliate Mailers, etc. However, companies sending transactional mail on behalf of their clients is allowed.

Lead Generation	Companies collecting email addresses for the purpose of growing sales pipeline, prospecting, etc. for brands not fully owned by the Certified entity.
List Rental Providers	Companies compiling permission-based email lists and sell access to them for brands to send email marketing campaigns to.
Penny Bid Auction	Online retailers offering one cent bidding to their customers.
Illegal Activities	Business operations or practices that may violate the law in a given jurisdiction.
Human Trafficking	Businesses operating for the purpose of illegally transporting people from one area to another.

Part 2: Measurability

Measurability helps us understand your overall sending patterns, including how often you're sending to your recipients. Here are the measurability requirements you must meet to become and stay ASP Certified:

1. **Measurable and consistent volume**
   - Your IP address sends at least 100 email messages to each Microsoft and Yahoo! over the most recent 30-day period, as seen in Validity's data sources.
   - Your IP address maintains measurable and consistent volume to remain Certified. Consistency is determined based on your particular program and sending behavior.
   - IP addresses without measurable and consistent volume are not eligible for review.
   - Once Certified, IP addresses without measurable and consistent volume will be suspended after 30 days and deleted from the program after 90 days.

2. **Targeting mailbox providers**

   - Your business cannot use a single IP address to send email to one specific mailbox provider.

Occasional and temporary single-receiver mailings may be tolerated under certain circumstances, but Validity must approve it in writing.

3. **Sending volume and IP limits**

   - Certified customers are limited in the number of IPs that can be associated with their account. The table below reflects the maximum number of IPs allowed in Certification based on your contracted annual sending volume.

Sending Volume (Annually)	Maximum # of IPs
1,200,000	2
3,000,000	2
7,500,000	3
12,000,000	4
36,000,000	5
60,000,000	6
90,000,000	7
120,000,000	8
180,000,000	9
240,000,000	10
420,000,000	13
600,000,000	16
1,200,000,000	18
> 1,200,000,000	22

Part 3: Infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to the hardware and process used to deploy email. It's crucial you send email from well-maintained infrastructure systems using best practices. Keep in mind you may need to work with your Email Service Provider (ESP) or internal IT team to comply with the requirements listed below in order to become and stay ASP Certified:

1. **Dedicated IP Addresses**
    - IP addresses are dedicated to you, the ASP, and are used for at least 60 days to send transactional emails on behalf of your clients.

2. **Open Relays**
    - Your infrastructure does not have any open relay servers.

3. **FCrDNS**
    - Your IP address reverse DNS (rDNS) entry matches the forward DNS entries, otherwise known as Forward-Confirmed reverse DNS (FCrDNS).

4. **Blocklists**
    - Your IP addresses or domains are not on a Validity-monitored blocklist. Repetitive or excessive blocklistings may result in the suspension or termination of your Certification benefits. Learn more about blocklist thresholds below.

5. **SPF**
    - All Return-Path and Sending domains used in conjunction with Certified IP addresses must have published Sender Policy Framework (SPF) records. Learn how to set up SPF here.
    - Your SPF records pass mailbox provider authentication checks within reasonable operational tolerance as determined by Validity.
    - All Return-Path and Sending domains do not use a +all or ?all directive.
    - All Return-Path and Sending domains do not include a pointer (PTR) record.

6. **DKIM**
    - All of your email sent over Certified IPs have DomainKeys Identified Mail (DKIM) authentication configured. Learn how to set up DKIM here.
    - Your DKIM authentication passes mailbox provider authentication checks within reasonable operational tolerance as determined by Validity.

7. **DMARC**
    - We highly recommend you implement Domain-based Message, Authentication, Reporting & Conformance (DMARC); however, it is not currently a Certification requirement. Learn how to

[set up a DMARC record here.](#)

8. **Role Accounts**

   - You configure and maintain abuse@ and postmaster@ [role accounts](#) for all [Return-Path and Sending domains](#) to handle complaints and other issues.

   - We also recommend you support and maintain other standard role accounts such as support@ or help@ accounts.

9. **Domain Ownership**

   - Sending domains used in conjunction with Certified IPs must be owned by and registered to you or your ASP client.

   - Your business must have full access and control over all [Return-Path domains](#), associated with the email sent from your IP addresses.

   - To prove domain ownership and control over domains associated with your Certified IP(s), you or your ASP client may be required to update the DNS with a TXT record containing a unique character code provided by Validity.

     o This TXT record may be required to remain within your or your ASP client's DNS record for the duration of your membership in the Certification program.

10. **List Ownership and Maintenance**

    - Your ASP clients must own and supply their mailing lists to you, the ASP. The mailing lists cannot belong to or originate from you.

    - You are responsible for maintaining the quality of your clients' mailing lists and ensuring that email addresses are properly validated.

    - Your business uses email address list maintenance systems to reliably receive and process delivery errors, bounce messages, and other replies from receiving networks.

    - You process hard bounces from emails sent over your IP addresses by removing the undeliverable email address from all future mailings.

Part 4: Email Message Content

We review your email message content to ensure that your email follows best practices as described by mailbox providers. This includes being transparent with your recipients about who you are. Here are the email message content requirements you must meet to become and stay ASP Certified:

1. **Branding**
   - All emails sent over Certified IPs must include clear branding identifying either you or your ASP client. Including the branding of both parties is recommended as a best practice.
   - Text-only mail must include the following information for either you or your ASP client:
     - Website url
     - Company name
     - Brand's standard signature
     - Valid physical mailing address

2. **Subject Line**
   - All subject lines are accurate.
   - All subject lines clearly relate to the email body content without being deceptive or misleading.
   - No subject lines include "RE:" or "FWD:". Using these abbreviations is typically seen as a deceptive tactic prompting recipients to open the email as if it were sent from an individual rather than a commercial sender.

3. **Email Body Content**
   - All email body content is truthful and accurate.
   - All emails sent over Certified IPs must include the physical address of either you or your ASP client.
   - You do not use URL shorteners in your body content. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of Bitly or TinyURL.
   - You do not use a Report Spam link within your email body's content. This is typically used by senders who attempt to avoid mailbox provider complaints.
   - Attachments, regardless of file type, within any Certified mail are not permitted.

4. **Message Headers**
   - The From and Friendly From name and address clearly identifies you or your ASP client.
   - Email message headers are not falsified, obscured, deceptive, or misleading in any way. Examples include the Return-Path header, the From header, the Friendly From name, and address.

Part 5: Privacy Policy

It's important to note your privacy policies should adhere to any applicable laws. Beyond that, your business should be fully transparent with potential recipients about your email program, how they can reach you, and what data you collect. Here are the privacy policy requirements you must meet to become and stay ASP certified:

1. **Easily Accessible**
   - Your company must have a valid privacy policy that is easily accessible on your website's homepage.

2. **Physical Address**
   - Your privacy policy includes a current physical address for your company. P.O. boxes are acceptable, although recipients prefer street addresses. If your physical address is not present in your privacy policy, Validity requires it be found either on the homepage or the contact us page of your website.

3. **Data Disclosure**
   - Your privacy policy must tell recipients about all personal information your business collects and how it might be shared.

4. **Brand Ownership**
   - If you are a brand owned by a parent company, you must include the name of the parent company and your relationship with that entity in your privacy policy.

Part 6: Legality

Each country and territory has legislation related to email and data practices. It's imperative that you fully comply and follow these laws and regulations wherever you operate. Examples include but are not limited to:

- United States of America: Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography And Marketing Act of 2003 (CAN-SPAM)

- Canada: Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL)

- European Union: General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

- Australia: Spam Act of 2003

Part 7: Security

It's important your business takes adequate, industry-standard steps to keep your database and systems secure so you can protect your infrastructure and your recipients. Here are the security requirements you must meet to become and stay ASP Certified:

1. **Infrastructure**
   - Your email infrastructure is maintained and operated in a responsible manner.

2. **Recipient Protection**
   - Your business uses adequate, industry-standard policies and procedures to secure and protect your recipients' email addresses and any other personally identifiable information (PII).

3. **Secure Systems**
   - Your business uses industry-standard efforts to prevent open proxies, open relays, computer viruses, worms, spyware, adware, trojans, recursive DNS, or any other item identified as malware on your infrastructure.

4. **Compromises**
   - You will notify Validity in writing within 2 business days if you discover your IPs or any domain associated with your Certified IPs has been compromised.
   - If your IP or any domain associated with your Certified IPs is ever compromised, you agree the IP or domain will not be re-enabled in the Certification program until a Validity employee completes a review and determines the cause of the compromise was properly mitigated.

Part 8: Feedback Loops (FBLs)

As a best practice, we recommend you sign up for all available feedback loops (FBLs) in order to effectively manage and reduce complaints. A full list of FBLs can be found here. If for some reason you aren't able to sign up for the entire list of FBLs, here are the feedback loops you must sign up for to become and stay ASP Certified:

- Comcast IP and domain feedback loop
- Verizon Media Group (Yahoo!/AOL) Feedback loop
- Microsoft Junk Email Reporting Program

Part 9: Communication

Whether you are just beginning your Certification application or audit or you're already Certified, it's important there is clear and open communication between your business and Validity. Here are the communication requirements you must follow in order to become and stay ASP Certified:

1. **Issue Resolution**
    - To resolve any Certification program-related issues, you and any team involved in sending email will cooperate with the Certification administrators.
    - You respond to any program notice within 3 days, and you begin taking any required actions within 10 days of the notice.
2. **Contact Information**
    - You maintain up-to-date contact information with Validity.

Part 10: Performance and Compliance

When you remain within the thresholds listed below, you receive benefits at the corresponding mailbox providers, improving your overall deliverability to ultimately reach more of your recipients. Exceeding any of these thresholds will result in suspension at the corresponding mailbox provider.

Note: We actively work with our partners to determine thresholds and suspensions.
You must meet the following performance requirements in order to become and stay ASP Certified:

Individual IP Microsoft SRD Compliance Thresholds (30-day cumulative)

SRD Volume	0-4	5-10	11 or More
SRD Rate	Not Enforced	5 Junk Votes	45%

Microsoft Group SRD Compliance Thresholds (30-day cumulative)

SRD Volume	0-9	10-30	31-50	51 or more
SRD Rate	Not Enforced	75%	65%	55%

Note: IPs that have 1 or more junk votes will be suspended if the Group SRD thresholds have been exceeded. Group SRD enforcement occurs when your total Certified IP count is greater than or equal to 2.

Tip: Having problems with your Microsoft SRD rates? Check out these resources.

Complaint Compliance Thresholds (30-day average of all sending volumes)

Microsoft: Complaint Rate	0.2%
Yahoo!/AOL: Inbox Complaint Rate	0.2%
Comcast: Complaint Rate	0.3%
Cloudmark: Complaint Rate	1.0%

Note: Certification only enforces mailbox provider complaint rate thresholds if you receive a minimum number of complaints at specific mailbox providers:

- Microsoft: 200 complaints
- Yahoo!: 200 complaints
- Comcast: 100 complaints
- Cloudmark: 100 complaints

Tip: Having problems with your complaint rates? Check out this resource.

Spam Trap Compliance Thresholds (30-day cumulative)

Critical Spam Traps	3 Trap Hits
Significant Spam Traps	5 Trap Hits
RP Trap Network	100 Trap Hits
Cloudmark Traps	100 Trap Hits

Tip: Having problems with spam hits? Check out this resource.

Blocklist Compliance Thresholds (current listing)

Critical Blocklist	1 Blocklisting
Significant Blocklist	2 Blocklistings

Tip: Curious to know what blocklists we monitor? Check out this resource.

Need Help?

For additional insight into Certification and its requirements, or to learn how to troubleshoot deliverability and reputation issues, visit our Help Center.

validity

Businesses run better and grow faster with trustworthy data. Tens of thousands of organizations rely on Validity solutions – including Everest, DemandTools, BriteVerify, Trust Assessments, and GridBuddy Cloud – to target, contact, engage, and retain customers effectively. Marketing, sales, and customer success teams worldwide trust Validity solutions to help them create smarter campaigns, generate leads, drive response, and increase revenue. For more information visit **validity.com** and connect with us on **LinkedIn** and **Twitter**.

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