



Messaging Anti-Abuse Working Group Position on Email Appending

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In marketing terms, “appending” is the practice of taking demographic information known (or assumed) to be related to a particular customer and matching it with other data. “Email appending” is also known as “e-appending” or “e-pending.” As used in this document, it refers to taking known demographic information and using various methods to determine an email address for the purpose of adding people to a list or otherwise sending them email messages.

The practice of email appending is in direct violation of core MAAWG values. There are many reasons why email appending is abusive and leads to a high volume of non-permission-based mail. This results in a large number of spam complaints and message rejections associated with senders who participate in email appending. In addition to complaints, email appending creates significant risks of violating consent requirements in privacy and anti-spam legislation.

MAAWG believes that permission is not transferable between marketing streams. When a user gives a company permission to market to him or her and provides a form of preferred contact, a company cannot assume this customer has consented to receive messages via email as well. The customer may have intentionally chosen not to provide an email address at the time of signing up.

Further, the data collected by email-appending service companies today is often error-prone. Their practice of using various clues to determine an email address from publicly available information often leads to incorrect guesses. For example, there is little reason to think that someone who shares the same last name and physical mailing address as a customer in a database file is the same person the marketer is trying to reach. Additionally, it is important to remember that just because an email address accepts messages, it does not mean the message went to the correct, intended recipient.

Finally, there is evidence that current email-appending service companies mix opt-in data from users the service believes have agreed to be email-appended with non-opt-in data. This muddies the water and it is often hard for an otherwise innocent sender to determine until after it is too late.

It is the position of MAAWG that email appending is an abusive practice. Sending email to someone who did not explicitly give informed consent for his or her email address to be used in this way is never acceptable. It will result in complaints, which only further illustrates how much end users find this practice abusive. It will result in delivery issues, largely as a result of those complaints. Legitimate marketers do not engage in email appending.

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