

2019 StreamScore™ Data Analysis

HOW STUDY DRIVES STRATEGY





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Study that Drives Strategy

The data reveals how no two clients are alike and how even those with similar overall scores can have widely different needs.

SocketLabs® has collected message and StreamScore™ scoring statistics for over eight years, evaluating that data to guide and optimize clients' email strategies. Knowing a client's overall email quality score is a good starting point. However, seeing how their StreamScore is comprised – i.e. by looking at the underlying components – is what creates real value for clients who want to implement operational improvements and optimize their email performance. The component-level detail is deeply instructive regarding where and how to hone their deliverability results. More specifically, reviewing underperforming StreamScore components allows SocketLabs to help clients scrutinize the key variables that they control, and that they can modify to improve mailing outcomes. For example, clients may learn that they need to improve:

- The quality of their email lists
- The nature and style of message content
- The reaction of recipients to their messages
- The degree to which their organizations follow “email best practices”
- The degree to which the combination of content and list quality leads recipients to engage with the client's content.

Because the overall score is driven by multiple factors, there are a variety of possible outcomes when evaluating StreamScore data. Depending upon the nature of a client's email traffic, there may be dramatically different recommendations for companies that have identical overall scores. Recommended changes could include modification to the list management process, the list acquisition process, the data hygiene process, the content creation process, the content boilerplate, the IP warming strategy, the mail timing, mail frequency, typical sending volumes, or the call to action.

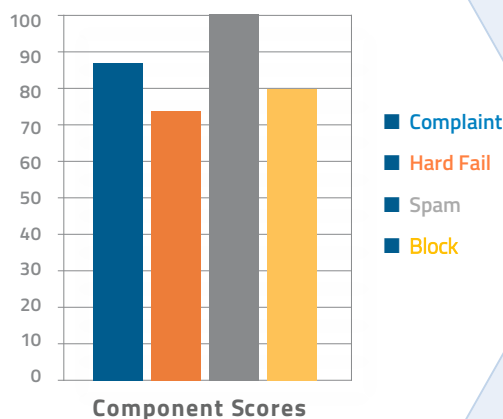
To illustrate how this works in practice, the analysis on the following pages looks at a variety of current SocketLabs clients across four different tiers of overall StreamScores. This study looks at the performance and recommendations that our email strategists have made for four groups of clients ranging from low performers (with an overall score of 65) to high performers (with an overall score of 95). The data reveals how no two clients are alike and how even those with similar overall scores can have widely different needs. Keep in mind that these scores represent only one of potentially many mail streams for each sending organization. Often, there are many additional streams, serving different operational purposes, which a client is managing simultaneously. Also, each set of StreamScore data is captured at a “specific point in time” which reflects the senders' mailing volume and circumstances averaged over a 15-day time window only. Depending on those circumstances, the diagnosis, and the sender's willingness to make adjustments, the scores can be improved rapidly. **The dynamic nature of the client's StreamScore is what makes it so important that an active management approach is taken.**

What is StreamScore™?

StreamScore™ is the quantitative system that allows **SocketLabs®** to evaluate how the email is performing with respect to the myriad of rules established by mailbox providers, spam detection software and industry watchdog groups. The analysis is based primarily on sender-controlled factors that can be measured and actively managed to improve email performance. SocketLabs isolates and tracks these factors for each stream of mail that is sent through a client's account, facilitating an in-depth level of analysis and awareness.

The aggregate score is strongly correlated to the deliverability and success rate that a client experiences – the higher the score, the better the results are. The score reflects how the world of receiving mailboxes (the largest members being Google, Yahoo, and Hotmail) is judging the quality of a sender's email approach on a regular basis, and how it is constructing an opinion about that sender – known as their "reputation". A strong reputation indicates that the sender is following best practices and is therefore avoiding the "red flag" issues that negatively impact performance.

StreamScore of 85



Case Study Group 1:

Overall StreamScore™ of 65

	Client 1	Client 2	Client 3	Client 4
Industry/Type	Financial Services	Retail	CRM Software	Digital Marketing
Email Type	Transactional	Transactional	Transactional	Marketing
Component Scores				
HARD FAIL	83	0	100	79
BLOCK	14	100	1	97
SPAM	100	100	99	100
COMPLAINT	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Overall Score	65	65	65	65
<i>NOTE: Numbers in red indicate areas of concern; N/A means no data was available</i>				

The companies in this group include three sending transactional messages and one which is sending marketing messages. One is a financial services company, one is a retailer, one is a CRM software vendor, and one is a digital marketing agency.

Client 1 – Financial Services Company

Observation: Very low Block Score and weak hard fail score. No complaint data is available.

Cause Analysis: This company sends email on behalf of other well-known organizations who are “frequently spoofed”. This fact leads to greater filtering scrutiny by mailbox providers to prevent spoofing.

Recommendation: Authentication protocols such as SPF and DKIM should be applied to help legitimize the messages in the eyes of email filtering tools.

Client 2 – Retail Company

Observation: High Hard Fail Score due to list quality. No complaint data is available.

Cause Analysis: The sender is not performing list hygiene.

Recommendation: Ensure that former customer names and invalid addresses or typos are identified and removed.

Client 3 – CRM Software Company

Observation: Very low Block Score due to a domain reputation issue. No complaint data is available.

Cause Analysis: The sender historically used poor email practices that have resulted in blacklisted IPs and a poor domain reputation.

Recommendation: Adopt new best practices to rebuild their reputation over time and increase delivery.

Client 4 – Digital Marketing Company

Observation: Complaint data is available and the Complaint Score is zero.

Cause Analysis: High complaint rates caused by unwanted transactional messages resulting from technical holes in the sender’s website. The subscription feature on their website allowed “subscription bombing” - where bots automatically register in high volumes using random people’s email addresses.

Recommendation: Close the web loophole and remove the unintended addresses.

Case Study Group 2:

Overall StreamScore™ of 75

	Client 1	Client 2	Client 3	Client 4	Client 5
Industry/Type	Digital Marketing	IT Services	Digital Marketing	SaaS	Healthcare
Email Purpose	Marketing	Transactional	Marketing	Transactional	Person-to-Person
Component Scores					
HARD FAIL	91	100	99	99	91
BLOCK	0	32	0	0	87
SPAM	99	97	82	73	95
COMPLAINT	72	N/A	90	95	29
Overall Score	75	75	75	75	75
NOTE: Numbers in red indicate areas of concern; N/A means no data was available					

The companies in this group include two sending transactional messages, two sending marketing messages, and one smart hosting client sending person-to-person email.

Client 1 – Digital Marketing Company

Observation: High percentage of blocked messages causing a score of zero. Mail is causing complaints too.

Cause Analysis: Blocking is due to early campaign recipients indicating mail as “spam”. Filters are currently blocking new messages as a result.

Recommendation: Change the list acquisition process to get opt-in permission, set recipient expectations, and send content that’s desired.

Client 2 – IT Services Company

Observation: Weak Block Score. No complaint data is available.

Cause Analysis: The client is not authenticating their email and anti-spoofing filters are questioning the legitimacy of the messages.

Recommendation: Apply SPF and DKIM authentication. Consider the benefits of defining a DMARC policy.

Client 3 – Digital Marketing Company

Observation: Block Score of zero due to a very high block rate. Complaint Score is strong.

Cause Analysis: Email policy issue. Email goes to many students at .edu addresses that have filters set very high and block most unrecognized incoming mail.

Recommendation: Identify alternate addresses and evaluate each variation of message content to remove potential filter triggers. Improve audience targeting to minimize complaint levels.

Client 4 – SaaS Company

Observation: Poor Block Score and low Spam Score.

Cause Analysis: This is a well-known software brand that is hitting spam traps because of how loosely email addresses are collected for free trials. Addresses are not forced to be valid when entered. Complaints are coming from random unintended recipients of the surveys causing reputation damage, domain damage, and blocked messages.

Recommendation: The client would benefit greatly from enforcing email validation on their website in the user sign up process.

Client 5 – Healthcare Company

Observation: Poor Complaint Score on person-to-person email.

Cause Analysis: Client mail has been moved to spam by many recipients.

Recommendation: Separate streams of B2B mail from B2C mail and establish more clear expectations among list members so they will receive subsequent communications.

Case Study Group 3:

Overall StreamScore™ of 85

	Client 1	Client 2	Client 3	Client 4
Industry/Type	Transportation	SaaS	eCommerce	Social Media
Email Purpose	Transactional	Transactional	Person-to-Person	Transactional
Component Scores				
HARD FAIL	78	97	93	82
BLOCK	80	87	65	71
SPAM	100	100	100	100
COMPLAINT	84	54	N/A	78
Overall Score	85	85	85	85
	NOTE: Numbers in red indicate areas of concern; N/A means no data was available			

The companies in this group include three sending transactional messages and one smart hosting client sending person-to-person email.

Client 1 – Transportation Company

Observation: B2B sending is generating complaints, triggering a bad Yahoo complaint rate. Hard Failure Score is the biggest concern because they are sending primarily to their own employees and partners.

Cause Analysis: Analysis revealed that the client is sending automated transactional messages to invalid addresses due to a typo in a script their developers wrote.

Recommendation: Whitelist their own domain to prevent the failure of internal messages and identify processes scripts that they need to correct.

Client 2 – SaaS Company

Observation: Poor Complaint Score on B2B mail.

Cause Analysis: Analysis revealed a high concentration of negative responses coming from a small group of related recipients within their target audience.

Recommendation: Reduce the volume of mail sent to this type of audience and improve the clarity of outbound messages to better identify the sender as a current business partner.

Client 3 – eCommerce Company

Observation: Poor Block Score. No Complaint data available.

Cause Analysis: Messages are being filtered due to concern regarding address spoofing.

Recommendation: Client can improve message delivery by adding authentication such as SPF or DKIM and considering development of a DMARC policy.

Client 4 – Social Media Company

Observation: Low Hard Fail Score, Complaint Score, and Block Score.

Cause Analysis: Multiple operational and content issues are limiting performance.

Recommendation: Client is advised to improve list acquisition practices for address validation and strengthen and tailor message content to improve relevance and reception by the audience.

Case Study Group 4:

Overall StreamScore™ of 95

	Client 1	Client 2	Client 3	Client 4
Industry/Type	Digital Marketing	Financial Services	Digital Marketing	Financial Services
Email Purpose	Marketing	Transactional	Marketing	Marketing
Component Scores				
HARD FAIL	98	97	100	100
BLOCK	98	95	82	99
SPAM	100	100	100	100
COMPLAINT	85	91	95	83
Overall Score	95	95	95	95
<i>NOTE: Numbers in red indicate areas of concern; N/A means no data was available</i>				

The companies in this group include one sending transactional messages and three sending marketing messages.

Client 1 – Digital Marketing Company

Observation: Sending high volumes for well-known consumer brands. Complaint rate is a small concern limiting performance.

Cause Analysis: Frequency of messages too high for some segments of customers.

Recommendation: Slightly better targeting could possibly reduce complaints. Take measures to better set recipient expectations regarding email frequency.

Client 2 – Financial Services Company

Observation: Complaint rate is a concern. Company is communicating on behalf of major financial brands to share rewards that are available to the recipients.

Cause Analysis: Many recipients are confused by the messages, don't believe them to be real, or believe them to be spam.

Recommendation: The client opportunity is to refine their messaging approach to build trust by better communicating their partnership/relationship with the financial institutions.

Client 3 – Digital Marketing Company

Observation: Strong performance other than a high block rate, causing a Block Score of only 82.

Cause Analysis: Content of certain marketing messages are being blocked by anti-spam and anti-spoofing filters.

Recommendation: Continue ongoing message review and modification to adapt to mailbox filtering strategies as they evolve.

Client 4 – Financial Services Company

Observation: Mail performance is strong, other than a lower than desirable Complaint Score.

Cause Analysis: Complaints for a company of this type is natural. Rate of complaint is not alarming given that the messages are for marketing and constantly being tested to drive audience engagement.

Recommendation: Conduct continuous review of mail streams and scores to identify tighter audience segments.

The Goal: Continuous Stream Optimization

While the statistics in this report reveal the many different scenarios that clients are facing, they also show the similarities between companies.

The optimization process requires a systematic approach that combines a set of industry best practices, with a deeper analysis of the StreamScore™ data.

This approach can help you keep up with the dynamic and aggressive filtering rules that mailboxes and security companies are constantly updating in an attempt to stay ahead of the latest phishing, spoofing, or spamming scheme.

The important point to remember when evaluating StreamScore data is that it directly relates to the deliverability of all transactional, marketing, and person-to-person mail. While it can require tedious attention to detail, the increased value that comes from improved deliverability and engagement is a critical driver of customer satisfaction, sales, and ROI.



About SocketLabs

SocketLabs is a B2B technology firm that provides flexible SaaS and on-premises solutions for solving a variety of complex email delivery challenges for both transactional and marketing messages. We are a pioneer in the Email Service Provider (ESP) market with a decade-long track record of excellence. Our unique, proprietary mail transfer agent (MTA) technology is trusted by clients around the globe who invigorate their SaaS platforms, mobile apps, and custom applications by “plugging in” to an unmatched email experience. Our founders have been creating cutting-edge email solutions for over 20 years and have built a customer support organization that considers responsiveness and satisfaction as our key performance objectives.



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