

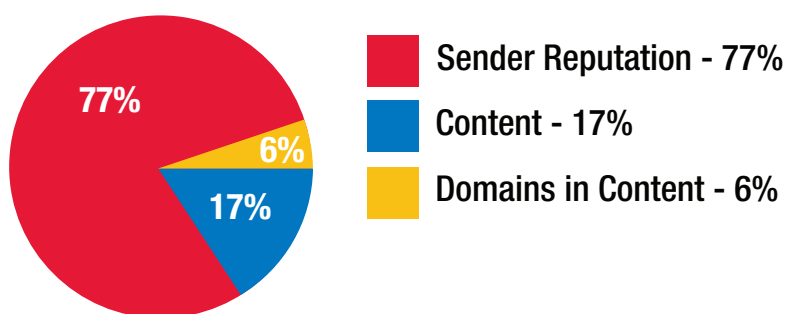
## Sender Reputation Causes Email Delivery Issues 83% of the Time

*Content secondary factor when email gets blocked or junked*

Nearly 20 percent of legitimate commercial email does not get delivered to the inbox (*Return Path Email Blocking & Filtering Report, August 2006*). Most marketers believe that their content is to blame for non-delivery, yet a new Return Path study shows that 77 percent of delivery issues occur because of the sender's email reputation. Content only plays a part in 23 percent of delivery issues, with 6 percent of that being linked directly to the reputation of domains included in the email content, and only 17 percent being related to factors such as words, fonts, images, or spelling.

Return Path studied more than 550 email campaigns sent by its Sender Score Monitor clients that had inbox delivery rates of less than 90 percent. Those emails were resent using a neutral or "clean" IP address, without content alteration, to the same ISPs that had previously blocked or bulked the original emails. (Return Path used IP addresses with history of only sending to seed accounts, therefore having no spam trap hits, complaints or other negative reputation factors associated with them.) Messages that were delivered properly to the inbox on this second send, therefore, owed their poor initial deliverability to the original sending IP's reputation, not the message content.

### Reputation Drives Email Blocking & Filtering



These numbers are the average of 21 major North American ISPs that Return Path tracked for its study. Notably, five of the leading ISPs showed reputation to be 100 percent of the reason behind non-delivery. Of the ISPs that showed content to be a significant filtering trigger, 89 percent are known to use Brightmail. Brightmail filters on numerous components, including the reputation of the actual content as based on spam traps and complaints previously attributed to the same content. Complaints and spam traps are major components of reputation.

When looking at B2B filters, reputation also seems to be the primary driver of filtering. We will release a B2B study at a later date, but a smaller sample showed nearly 100 percent of delivery failures to be reputation related.

To find out your company's reputation score, visit <http://www.returnpath.biz/repreport/>. For more information about reputation scores, visit [www.senderscore.com](http://www.senderscore.com) or contact Return Path at [info@returnpath.net](mailto:info@returnpath.net).

## Reputation vs Content Filtering by ISP

<b>Adelphia</b> Reputation 44% Content 56%	<b>CompuServe</b> Reputation 100% Content 0%	<b>Mail.com</b> Reputation 100% Content 0%	<b>USA.net</b> Reputation 78% Content 12%
<b>AOL</b> Reputation 100% Content 0%	<b>Cox</b> Reputation 50% Content 50%	<b>MSN</b> Reputation 32% Content 68%	<b>Verizon</b> Reputation 86% Content 14%
<b>ATT</b> Reputation 90% Content 10%	<b>Earthlink</b> Reputation 77% Content 23%	<b>Netscape</b> Reputation 88% Content 12%	<b>Yahoo!</b> Reputation 80% Content 20%
<b>Bell South</b> Reputation 97% Content 3%	<b>Gmail</b> Reputation 100% Content 0%	<b>NetZero</b> Reputation 90% Content 10%	
<b>Cablevision</b> Reputation 79% Content 21%	<b>Hotmail</b> Reputation 40% Content 60%	<b>RoadRunner</b> Reputation 100% Content 0%	
<b>Comcast</b> Reputation 85% Content 15%	<b>Mac.com</b> Reputation 83% Content 17%	<b>SBC</b> Reputation 79% Content 21%	

*These numbers do not include the domain reputation statistics.*

The results of this study show that when looking at email inbox delivery failures, it is important to think beyond quick content fixes. Email delivery problems are much more likely to stem from systemic problems within a given email program that shape the sender reputation. In general, email receivers look at reputation levers such as email volume, email infrastructure (including authentication), list quality (unknown user rates), complaint rates, spam trap hits and listings on public blacklists and whitelists when framing their opinions about particular senders. Focusing on improving those areas of an email program will have lasting positive impacts on email delivery rates.

The tool used to do this study, Sender Score Resender, will be available to Sender Score clients in November 2006. If you need help with your email deliverability management, contact us at [info@returnpath.net](mailto:info@returnpath.net).

Find out your email reputation with Return Path's Sender Score Reputation Monitor,  
<http://www.returnpath.net/repreport/>