

CASE STUDY

The Bradford
Hammacher Group
migrates from Return
Path to Everest,
achieves a 98% inbox
placement rate and
tackles Apple's MPP.



The Bradford Hammacher Group is a world leader in direct marketing and a provider of limited-edition gifts, collectibles, home décor, jewelry, and much more. Founded in 1973, the company's commitment to product quality and customer service has made it one of the premier direct marketing companies in today's international economy.

The company's mission is to identify and understand their customers' aesthetic, emotional, and psychological needs that can be fulfilled with art-based or theme-inspired offerings.

The Bradford Hammacher Group, which also does business as the Bradford Exchange, is in Niles, Illinois.

The challenge:

Maintaining strong email performance and building a successful omnichannel marketing strategy in a highly seasonal industry.

As a leading provider of gifts, collectibles, home décor, jewelry, and much more, the Bradford Hammacher Group relied on the email channel to connect with customers and prospects.

However, the seasonal nature of Bradford's business posed unique challenges for its email program.

The company earns a significant portion of its annual revenue during the holiday season.

"The holidays are absolutely crazy for us," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi, Assistant Director of Email Marketing at the Bradford Hammacher Group. "And the email channel is one of our most dependable revenue drivers during this season. Our executives love it for a reason."

But it became increasingly difficult to win subscribers' attention as global sending volumes increased and their inboxes grew more crowded.

Given Bradford's reliance on email, the company knew it needed first-rate visibility of its email deliverability—its ability to reach subscriber's inboxes instead of being blocked or filtered to spam.



Everest is like a Ferrari. We learn something new every time we go into it, and we've barely scratched the surface.

Johanna Morlock-Abbasi
Assistant Director of Email Marketing

Furthermore, the company was eager to build out its omnichannel marketing strategy to better connect with customers in the saturated retail industry.

As this strategy evolved, Bradford needed to keep email performance strong to drive revenue as a standalone channel and as a complement to other outreach efforts.

The solution:

A partnership with Validity, including a migration from Return Path to the Everest email success platform.

To reach the next level of email performance, Bradford chose to partner with Validity, the leading provider of email success and data quality solutions.

Bradford initially onboarded with Validity's legacy email platform, Return Path. Over the next several years, Bradford improved its email performance and made more strategic decisions, guided by the platform's deliverability, spam placement, and subscriber engagement insights.

When the Return Path platform was discontinued, Johanna Morlock-Abbasi knew she wanted to continue the partnership with Validity. She and Bradford decided to migrate to Everest, Validity's next-generation email platform, during the busy holiday season.

Initially, the team at Bradford was concerned that the migration process would disrupt their productivity during a key revenue-earning period. However, the process proved simpler than expected.

"One great aspect of Everest is the fact that you don't need to be an IT expert to handle the migration and get up to speed," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi. "Even someone with a little bit of technical knowledge can do it."

The Bradford team was pleased to discover that Everest was surprisingly user friendly. "The Everest tools are advanced, but it's kind of like tech for dummies," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi. "Anyone can stand it up and you don't need to get the CIO involved to do it."

Users quickly grew accustomed to the Everest platform's advanced functionality and holistic visibility of email performance.

"Return Path was good, but it was kind of clunky," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi. "Everest is like a Ferrari. We learn something new every time we go into it, and we've barely scratched the surface."

"For people who might be newer in the email space, it can seem like a lot," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi of the migration process. "Just remember to break things down into smaller, more manageable steps," she advised other email marketing professionals.

The results:

Sustained, best-in-class email performance and confidence to navigate new email challenges.

The Bradford Hammacher Group quickly built upon the success they saw with the Return Path platform. Despite ongoing seasonal challenges and stricter spam filtering algorithms, Bradford maintained a strong inbox placement rate of **98 percent**.

"Everest's deliverability insights are key for us," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi. "Now we know exactly where our emails are going, and we can make sure the time and resources we're investing in email don't go to waste."

This strong email performance proved essential as Bradford continued to build out its omnichannel strategy. Today, the company leverages a strategic mix of email, direct mail campaigns, social media, and most recently, SMS. The email channel is an essential piece of this omnichannel puzzle.

To win attention in crowded inboxes, Bradford has experimented with innovative email templates and creative designs, supported by Everest's design testing features.

"We like to really push the envelope with our emails—we do GIFs, emojis, and as much animation as we can. Now we know exactly how these emails will appear across different mail clients," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi. "We can see any issues with subject lines, codes, or templates before we hit send."

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Johanna Morlock-Abbasi
Assistant Director of Email Marketing



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Like most email marketing teams, the Bradford team faced challenges following the launch of Apple's Mail Privacy Protection in September 2021. "Apple's new feature completely inflated our open rates—as it has for everyone," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi.

Bradford now reports over 77 percent of email opens as coming from the Apple Mail proxy. This made it difficult to rely on open rates to measure subscriber engagement.

However, the team adapted quickly. Supported by Everest's insights into subscriber platform usage, the company is beginning to segment its iOS 15 users and measure their engagement differently, focusing on clicks and conversions. This makes it possible for Bradford to accurately measure their engagement performance and zero in on areas for improvement.

In the future, Bradford faces new obstacles as their subscribers' priorities shift and the email landscape becomes more challenging. "This year is different for our business because we're still coming off of COVID-19 and inflation is a concern," said Johanna Morlock-Abbasi.

However, the team feels confident that their email program is strong enough to overcome these obstacles. "Email-wise, the way we have everything set up now is working great, and that puts us in a good position," Johanna Morlock-Abbasi added.



About Validity

Businesses run better and grow faster with trustworthy data. Tens of thousands of organizations rely on Validity solutions – including Everest, DemandTools, BriteVerify, GridBuddy Connect, and MailCharts – 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.