DonorsChoose optimizes email deliverability to reach donors and support teachers through COVID-19 and beyond.

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DONORS CHOOSE

DonorsChoose is a nonprofit organization that makes it easy for anyone to support public education through donations that fund individual classroom needs. Since 2000, DonorsChoose has mobilized nearly 2 million donors and raised over $314 million to support classroom projects across the US.

The Highlights:

99.7%
AVERAGE INBOX PLACEMENT RATE

99
AVERAGE SENDER SCORE

$26M
RAISED THROUGH THE EMAIL CHANNEL

The challenge:

Sender reputation and list hygiene issues jeopardize critical email communications.

Email is a crucial channel for DonorsChoose. It gives them the ability to keep teachers informed, drive traffic to their website, and — perhaps most importantly — connect donors with classroom projects that mean the most to them. In fact, 36% of current donations are attributable to the email channel.

During the COVID-19 crisis, email became more important than ever. As many people shifted their giving to the immediate pandemic response, email outreach became a lifeline for donor appeals. At the same time, the move to virtual learning created new challenges for teachers — and new processes for delivering their funded materials, which had to be communicated quickly.

But deliverability issues were jeopardizing the effectiveness of the DonorsChoose email program. Over time, poor list hygiene gave rise to problems with spam traps and complaints. The resulting reputation issues with Google Postmaster led to throttling and slow delivery on sends to Gmail users.

> "Everest gives us such a clear picture of our email health and the steps we can take to maintain it. Now we're making proactive decisions rather than waiting until something goes wrong. When we do have issues, advice from Validity experts has been really helpful in turning that around.

Jasmine Penny
Email Program Director

Jasmine continued, "Deliverability has been kind of a 'black hole' for us, but through our partnership with Validity, we've been able to dig deep and really become deliverability experts."

Everest email deliverability platform — plus a little expert advice.

The team at DonorsChoose turned to their long-time partners at Validity for help with their deliverability challenges. An investment in Validity's Everest email deliverability platform provided the visibility they needed to improve sender reputation, inbox placement, and overall email performance.

- Using inbox placement insights, the team can accurately gauge which emails are hitting the inbox and which messages resonate best with subscribers.

- Design testing ensures every message renders exactly as expected across every device and all of the most important mailbox providers.

- Integrated dashboards provide a holistic view of email performance, including critical engagement metrics, all in one, easy-to-use interface.

- Custom alerts provide real-time notifications when deliverability issues arise, so they can be corrected before they impact performance.

- Quarterly health checks are an opportunity to get questions answered and talk through any concerns about strategy or upcoming campaigns.

In addition, expert advice from Validity helped DonorsChoose get their email list back in shape. Adjustments to their email retention policy allowed them to remove a significant number of inactive subscribers from their list, which greatly reduced both spam traps and spam complaints. Validity experts also guided them in tailoring the audience for each send and controlling send volume to avoid spikes — all of which helped to improve overall sender reputation.

Why Validity

Turn your data into revenue. Whether you're looking to optimize the performance of your email marketing, data management or sales functions, Validity is your trusted partner to ensure you're reaching who you need to.

> In a year where we thought donations would be way down, we were able to keep our numbers pretty close to pre-pandemic levels. Through our email program, we've built real trust and credibility with our donors. They know we understand what teachers really need, and they're ready to respond.

Jasmine Penny
Email Program Director

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For more information visit
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The results:

Outstanding email performance to drive real-world results.

Since migrating to the Everest platform, DonorsChoose has seen impressive gains in several key deliverability metrics. With increased visibility into reputation issues, DonorsChoose has raised their average Sender Score to a best-in-class 99. Improved list hygiene has reduced their spam traps to nearly zero, out of more than a half-million daily sends. They have also achieved near-perfect inbox placement, averaging 99.7%.

Most importantly, the strength of the DonorsChoose email program allowed them to navigate the COVID-19 crisis without a significant drop-off in donations. During the pandemic, DonorsChoose leveraged email to raise more than $26 million in support of educational projects nationwide.

As they move into the post-pandemic recovery phase, DonorsChoose will use their email program to re-engage lapsed donors and highlight the urgent need for assistance as schools begin to reopen. They also plan to roll out a new SMS-based program, leveraging Validity BriteVerify, to validate phone numbers and ensure healthy engagement across this new channel.

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.

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