

CASE STUDY

# Ice Travel Group Successfully Completes a Corporate Merger and ESP Migration with Support from Validity Sender Certification and Everest.





Ice Travel Group is comprised of two trusted holiday comparison and travel deals sites—TravelSupermarket and icelolly.com. The company partners with various travel brands to spread the word on discounted pricing for package holidays, car hire, travel insurance, hotels, and flights.

## The Highlights:

99

SENDER SCORE

99%

INBOX PLACEMENT RATE

### The challenge:

## Managing the infrastructural changes of a company merger without damaging email performance.

Email has always been one of Ice Travel Group's preferred marketing channels—particularly during peak travel periods. Their average subscriber receives a number of diversified and personalized emails per week from the brand, featuring colorful images, dynamic content, and information on the latest travel deals.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic created economic uncertainty for Ice Travel and the travel industry as a whole.

Jonathan Kirk, CRM and Design Manager at Ice Travel Group recalls this period as a time for the company to “hunker down” and use the opportunity to emerge stronger from the global health crisis.

While they certainly came out stronger (more on that later), they also expanded.

In September 2021, Kirk and icelolly.com joined forces with TravelSupermarket to form Ice Travel Group. Pooling their resources was the perfect solution to meet the surging demands of those returning to travel after pandemic lockdowns.

However, this shakeup presented significant challenges for the newly established company's email program. The two companies had very different philosophies when it came to email best practices—and faced the challenge of educating subscribers about the new relationship so they weren't surprised by communications from the new parent company.

Furthermore, the merger required each entity to migrate their email service provider (ESP) to Dotdigital, a new platform that could handle their combined sending volumes.



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**Jonathan Kirk**

CRM and Design Manager at  
Ice Travel Group

ESP migrations are notoriously risky from an email deliverability perspective. When moving to a new provider, emails are typically sent from a new IP address that has no verifiable sending history. Particularly if these IPs haven't been warmed properly, sending large volumes of email from these addresses can trigger spam filters. This in turn leads to low inbox placement rates and blocklistings, and can even "burn" the new IP address past the point of recovery.

As the company faced a pandemic, a merger, and the tech complications that came with it, they leaned into their relationship with Validity, the leading provider of email deliverability and CRM data quality solutions, for support.

**The solution:**

## **Validity's Sender Certification program and Everest deliverability platform.**

Ice Travel Group initially onboarded Return Path, Validity's legacy email success platform.

As he recalls, Validity's expert guidance was particularly helpful when Ice Travel Group (then icelolly.com) underwent their first ESP migration in 2017. "It was my first time going through a large migration like that," said Kirk. "And Validity was just so helpful."

However, as their program continued to evolve, Ice Travel needed to advance their marketing tech stack to keep pace. "We had to get our email program up to an even higher professional standard," said Kirk. "Migrating to Validity Everest helped us become even more accurate when it came to monitoring inbox placement and overall performance."

This was particularly critical during their merger with TravelSupermarket. The migration email required a careful, strategic approach. As Kirk explained, "It was quite a difficult process. We had different IPs hosted in different places and we were trying to be very careful to prevent any disruptions to our inbox placement."

Throughout the process, Ice Travel Group trusted Validity to ensure things went smoothly. This process included setting up valid DMARC records and reviewing their contact lists for older accounts that might threaten their deliverability. "We have a lot of people who have been on our subscriber list a long time, who are still very much active, but their older accounts could be interpreted as a threat to our list," said Kirk. "Validity gave us the confidence that these accounts were still safe to use."



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Furthermore, the company had an ace up its sleeve during the difficult migration process. Both TravelSupermarket and icelolly.com had completed Validity's Sender Certification program—meaning they were recognized as a reputable sender by major mailbox providers like Yahoo and Microsoft. This made the newly formed parent company less vulnerable to deliverability problems: their emails benefitted from the company's trusted status as a known good actor.

Once accepted into Validity's Certification program, each company saw an immediate improvement in email deliverability and subscriber engagement.

Today, Ice Travel Group continues to rely on Sender Certification to maximize their email, deliverability, engagement, and revenue—all absolutely essential in a highly competitive sector like travel.

On the Everest side, Ice Travel makes daily use of the platform's Design and Content module to ensure that every email renders as expected in subscribers' inboxes. They also analyze all of their main competitors using Everest's Competitive Intel functionality and use the solution's Infrastructure module to monitor their DMARC compliance.

**The results:**

## **A successful merger with virtually no damage to the company's sender reputation.**

With Validity's support, Ice Travel Group completed its merger with minimal disruption to their email performance.

"It was amazing to see that we managed to maintain our sender reputation throughout this entire process," said Kirk. "I actually saw our Sender Score increase a couple of notches!"

After qualifying for Sender Certification, TravelSupermarket joined icelolly.com in achieving an average Sender Score of 99.

Their inbox placement rate is an impressive 99 percent—a full 13 percent higher than their non-Certified counterparts. These numbers showcase them as a truly best-in-class email program.

With insights from Validity Everest and Sender Certification, Ice Travel Group can manage deliverability risks and scale up their operations.

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**Jonathan Kirk**

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The company now has the confidence to send large volumes of email, without worrying about triggering spam filters. “We need to push large sends when the business requires it,” explained Kirk. “On Black Friday for example. Certification means there’s less chance for things to go wrong and for us to be throttled by mailbox providers.”

Kirk and the Ice Travel team also have peace of mind to try new email initiatives—for example, implementing Brand Indicators for Message Identification (BIMI).

“Validity provides extra manning for the boats and makes sure we are doing everything by the book,” Kirk said. “It’s so great to have that security and expertise. We always have someone we can go to and ask, ‘Are we doing this correctly?’”

Moreover, Kirk finds the cost-effectiveness of Validity’s solution notable—which is particularly significant given the scale of their operations and their need for efficient budget allocation. Kirk points out the financial advantage by stating, “People are spending hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of pounds on their email programs. With Validity, you’re paying a small fraction of that to protect these investments and protect one of your key marketing channels,” said Kirk. “I think you’d be crazy not to consider it.”



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