



Bonded Sender

The growth of unsolicited email (referred to as “spam”) has negatively impacted both senders and receivers of email. Traditional anti-spam systems have been developed to identify spam, but these systems have the drawback of periodically destroying legitimate email traffic. The Bonded Sender Program works with existing anti-spam solutions to fight spam and eliminate the risk of accidentally destroying legitimate email in spam filters.

The IronPort™ Bonded Sender™ Program turns the spam problem upside down by identifying legitimate email traffic. Originators of legitimate email can post a financial bond to ensure the integrity of their email campaign. Receivers who feel they have received an unsolicited email from a Bonded Sender can complain to their ISP, enterprise, or IronPort and a financial charge is debited from the bond. This market-based mechanism allows email senders to ensure their message gets to their end user, and provides corporate IT managers and ISPs with an objective way to ensure only unwanted messages get blocked.

How It Works

To become a Bonded Sender legitimate email marketers are required to complete a certification process and post a financial bond to guarantee the integrity of their email campaigns. Email senders and receivers both participate in the Bonded Sender Program. Organizations sending email deposit a financial bond and their outgoing email IP (Internet Protocol) addresses are added to the BSP Whitelist.

1. **TRUSTe Certification:** Independent, third party oversight of the program is provided by TRUSTe, a nonprofit organization dedicated to enabling individuals and organizations to establish trusting relationships over the Internet. TRUSTe certifies senders and provides oversight and dispute resolution services for Bonded Sender, including monitoring complaint rates and auditing compliance with program standards for senders.
2. **Bond Posting:** To ensure the ongoing integrity of email sent by Bonded Senders, senders must post a financial bond. The size of the bond will vary based on the volume of email sent. When end-users complain about the traffic they receive from a Bonded Sender above a specified threshold, a debit is made against the bond.

When an email is sent, the receiving ISP or corporation performs a standard DNS query (a PTR query) with the BSP Whitelist on the IP address the email originated from. The BSP Whitelist returns a response that indicates whether the incoming email is bonded. Recipients report unwanted Bonded Sender email by forwarding such email to their organization's abuse email address.

The benefits of the Bonded Sender Program are currently limited to those senders who can qualify and are currently experiencing deliverability challenges at either the MSN/Hotmail domains or Road Runner and smaller domains using spam filters that exempt Bonded Senders.

Several key aspects of the Bonded Sender Program are also under review and include:

- **Accountability Level:** The Program is currently based on the IP address. Some mechanism is needed to establish accountability below the IP level. This issue is of particular concern for ESP's who send mail for multiple clients under a single IP, and for those who have multiple divisions of the same company mailing under the same IP.



- **Complaint Thresholds:** The current Program threshold of 1 complaint/million sent is viewed as unrealistically stringent, and neither statistically reliable nor a true indicator of mailer performance.
- **Program Transparency:** As currently structured, the Program does not provide for sufficient transparency into its key components (e.g. accreditation, threshold changes) or for the involvement of Bonded Senders in the decisions that affect them. Of particular concern is the lack of complaint feedback and how that undermines the integrity of the Program's complaint resolution process and the ability of Bonded Senders to manage their lists and practices in limiting their financial exposure.

Conclusion

e-Dialog has been reviewing this and other authentication and reputation proposals and is making preparations to implement the appropriate technologies to deliver our client's mail. Since a clear winner(s) is not yet evident and each proposal has advantages and disadvantages, we will continue to test the impact of implementation of each proposal.