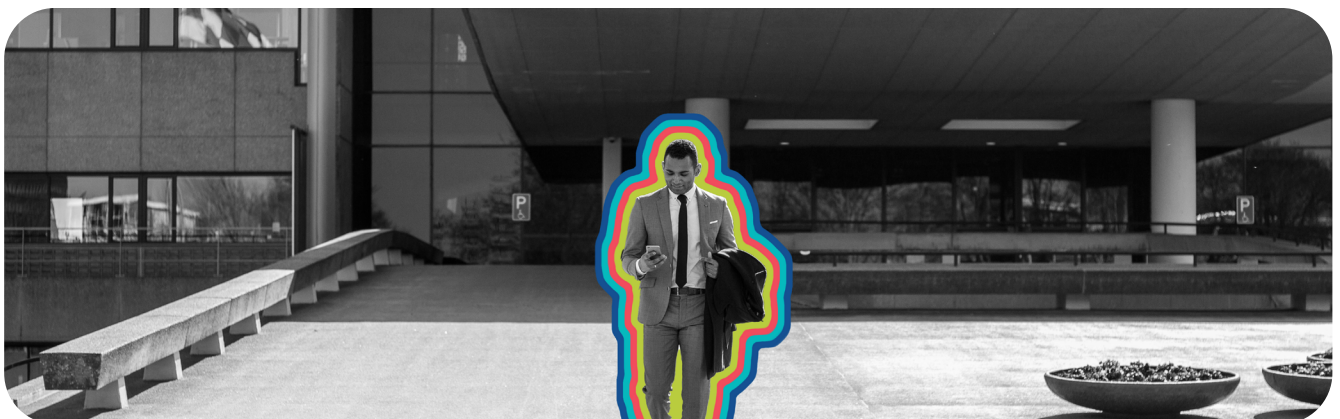DELIVERABILITY 101:

Our Guide to Engagement Segmentation for Improved Deliverability

We optimized our email marketing automation workflow, cutting 37 nurturing programs down to six. Open rates and click-throughs are surging.

Segmenting your data is always important because it allows you to target the right people. But segmenting based on engagement is even more important for maintaining a good sender reputation.

Although many guides recommend a 90- or 180-day engagement segmentation rule, there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Depending on the sender's cadence, these recommendations could be far too long or far too short. In the next few pages, we will guide you through developing an engagement segmentation strategy that works for you.
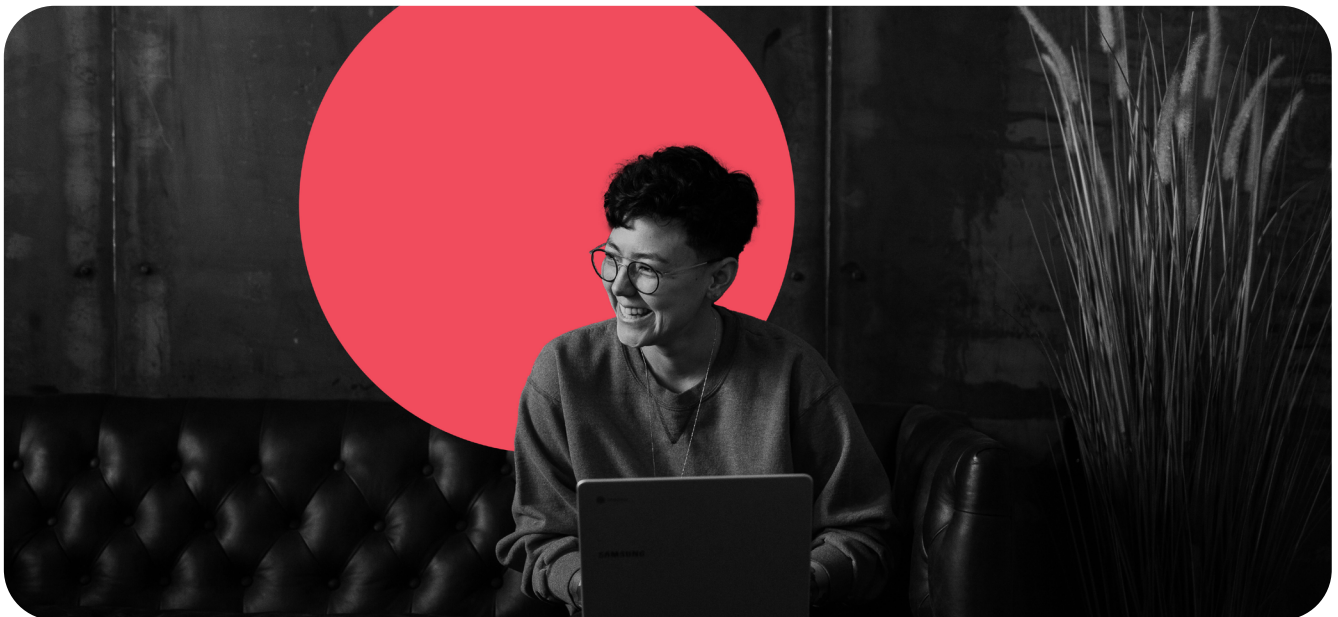
Defining "Engaged"

Due to the individual nature of each sender's engaged group, it is critical to define engagement for each sender. An engaged individual has done some type of recognizable "action" within a certain timeframe, which is largely dependent on the cadence that individual receives. Basing the engagement segments on the cadence allows for a nuanced and effective email strategy. This table shows expected engagement based on regular sending without accounting for sales cycles.

Senders can use this table to establish a quick engagement segmentation schedule, but there are more nuanced versions that enable recipients to travel through sending tiers until emails are sunset.

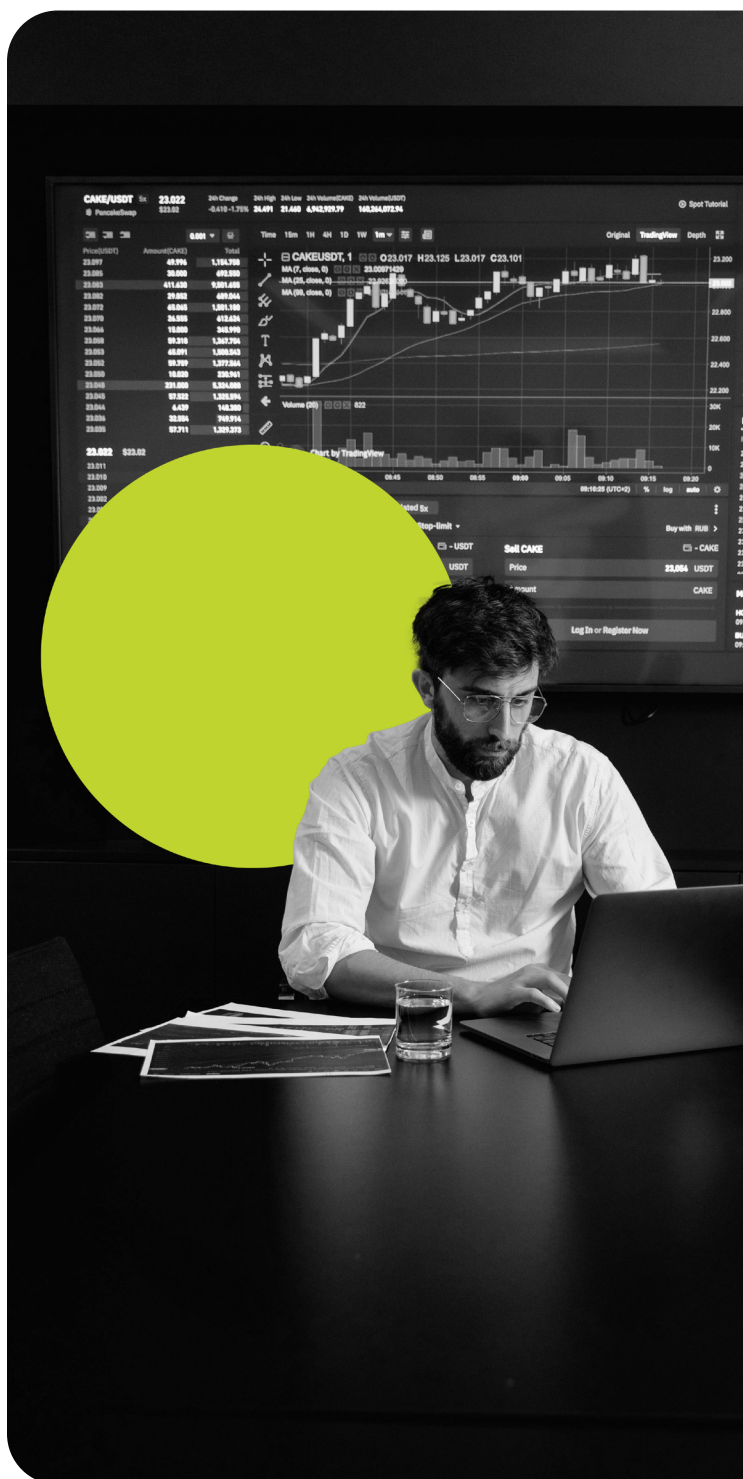| Sends per Month	Engaged in Action within Time Period (Months)
9	1
7	2
6	3
5	4
4	5
3	8-10
2	20
1	30

How to Segment on Engagement in Act-On

Act-On allows behavior segmentation based upon a time segment, which is one of the major reasons knowing the engagement time is critical. Using the combination logic, a sender can either make an "engaged" or "unengaged" segment to either mail to or suppress against, respectively. Due to the extra work involved in suppression, we recommend using engaged segments as opposed to suppression segments.

Below are two examples of potential engagement segmentation. The logic needed to implement these segments is as follows:

1 At least 1 open OR 1 click within the given time period

2 In all-time was sent messages at least a certain number of times, defined by the sender

3 In the defined time period was sent messages at least a certain number of times, defined by sender and should be less than all-time

Struggling with Unengaged Recipients? Re-Engagement Dos and Don'ts.

When the Postmaster of Gmail was asked what senders should do to re-engage with someone who is recently unengaged or hasn't been sent to in a long while, the answer was simple: "Don't do it." Valuable prospects and customers no doubt exist in older lists or lists of unengaged recipients, and there are some re-engagement strategies with little potential for harm, but as a general rule, stay away from re-engagement initiatives.

However, if you are in a position where you must implement re-engagement strategies, you should target recipients who are close to the actively engaged group. A re-engagement campaign can be automated easily within a marketing automation platform like Act-On, and the same automated programs can be used to remove contacts that do not re-engage.

To set up an automatic re-engagement campaign, either list maintenance contacts that fall out of the engaged segment or make this the first step of an automated program. From there, send two to three separate re-engagement emails at a longer cadence than usual (at least 2-15x longer depending on normal frequency). So if you are currently sending 1 email per day, try sending the first message 1 week later and the second 15

days later and a final message another 15 days later. For cadences that are less frequent, such a significant increase isn't necessary. Just be sure to keep sales cycles in mind when determining send schedules.

Long-term re-engagement or re- engagement after a reputation reset

This subset carries a higher risk of bad data and increased complaints than standard re-engagement campaigns. Again, if you must attempt this form of re-engagement, you should follow these 3 guidelines:

1 Cleanse the list before you send to minimize harm.

2 At most send, 20% of your total daily volume to a list that is unengaged. Preferably, you should try to keep it below 10%.

3 Sunset the emails after 2-3 attempts to re-engage maximum (even with a cleanse, traps can be in that data destroying your reputation)

Sunsetting Emails

Once someone is unengaged, sunset the email. Specifically, you should sunset the email address portion of a contact, as there is a chance the contact (unless they have opted out) has either moved or transitioned to a new email. Tying past activity to a new email through a CRM can be helpful. We recommend placing these emails in a "do not send" or sunset list segment.

For those facing problems with stakeholders who are reluctant to lose possible leads and who might not understand the reputational impacts of poor engagement, stress the maxim of quality over quantity. Sending to less contacts saves money, and if done right, has a higher return than sending to more.

Conclusion

This chapter in our deliverability series only scratches the surface of how to tailor your segmentation strategy for better inbox placement. This guide is intended to help establish a solid foundation for building your segmentation strategy moving forward. How you segment your customers will also depend on factors such as their primary pain points and interests, as well as our overall business goals.

Using the 3-month group

Automatically grab those that fall out of the engaged list through a list maintenance program running weekly. Make an automated program with this flow:

WAIT 1 WEEK

Send Re-Engagement Email 1
- *Still there?*

WAIT 2 WEEKS

Send Re-Engagement Email 2
- *Reasons to keep us around*

WAIT 2 WEEKS

Send Re-Engagement Email 3
- *We'll be sad to see you go!*

WAIT 1 WEEK

Send contacts to Sunset List