

myweeklymarketing.

Janice Hostager: 0:04

I'm Janice Hostager. After three decades in the marketing business and many years of being an entrepreneur, I've learned a thing or two about marketing. Join me as we talk about marketing, small business, and life in between. Welcome to My Weekly Marketing. Do you have email subscribers for your business? I hope you do, but then you're going to want to pay attention closely to today's episode. Starting February 1st, 2024, the big email companies Google and Yahoo will be implementing some new rules for email marketing that will almost certainly affect your business. To combat phishing, spoofing, and spam emails that we all get from time to time, these email providers are tightening their authentication process. What that means for you and me is that you need to make sure that your domain-based email address, like info at [janicehostager.com](mailto:info@janicehostager.com), the email you send it from, and your Google Workspace or Microsoft 365 email is verified. So if that makes you a little nervous, you're not alone. I'm right here with you. That's why I wanted to bring on my friend email marketing expert, Scott Hartley. You may remember Scott, he was one of my guests way back on episode 13, talking about email marketing in general, but today he's going to tell us a whole lot more about what's happening with Google and with Yahoo and how we can be ready for the February 1st deadline. Here's Scott. Well, hey, Scott, welcome to the show, Welcome back, I should say.

Scott Hartley: 1:50

Yes, Janice, I really appreciate the opportunity.

Janice Hostager: 1:53

I have been really looking forward to this because there's some big news that's happening right now in terms of email marketing, right, and I feel like the information isn't getting out as much as it should be, and I want to make sure that all these listeners understand what's going on and, as I mentioned earlier, I'll be learning right along with you, because I'm not sure I have a full understanding of all that's happening with Google, yahoo and AOL, and this is for email marketers and they want to cut down on spam, mass email, phishing, that sort of thing, right.

Scott Hartley: 2:27

Yeah, Google and Yahoo. They're just sick and tired of all the spam, so they're doing everything that they can to curb that. And, of course, the sad part is that it affects people like you and I who have a legitimate reason to send emails to people who actually

want to hear from us. So we have to jump through some hoops so that we can become compliant with their new mandates.

Janice Hostager: 2:49

Okay, yeah, so tell us more about what's going on. This is starting to happen on February 1ST, right?

Scott Hartley: 2:55

Yeah, so the absolute date that everything needs to be in compliance. So everybody who's sending emails needs to be compliant by February 1. That's when Google and Yahoo are going to start implementing their new rules. Now it's not going to take effect like all immediately. They're going to kind of gradually, you know, put those into place. But you want to make sure that you're ready by February 1st, and Google has specifically stated that they will reward you in some way. They haven't given how, but they said that they will reward people in some way if they are prepared before that deadline, so if they have everything in place. So getting this done sooner rather than later is going to probably pay off in some benefits, especially if you're emailing contacts using Gmail email addresses or Google Workspace accounts. But yeah, I mean, there's really four big rules that they are now enforcing that are really required. So number one is that you must have full and complete authentication for your sending domain for every platform from which you send emails, right? So we want to make sure that we have DKIM records, SPF records, and a DMARC record with reporting set up for your sending domain. So, for example, for myself, I send emails from masterplanforsuccess.com, so I need to make sure that I have authentication set up for my regular one-to-one email. So I say I use Google Workspace as my regular email. So Janice if I send you an email, We've been corresponding back and forth. That's been through Google Workspace. I have to have that authenticated and in my research over the past several weeks I found that 60% of people don't even have their regular one-to-one email fully authenticated. And then I use keep as my email marketing platform. So you know it's just like an active campaign mailchimp. There's a lot of different platforms out there. You also have to have that authenticated with DKMS, PF, and DMARC so that your emails will continue to get sent. If you don't have that authentication in place, your emails will either not get delivered at all or they will go straight to the junk or spam folder. So this is the most critical out of the four rules that Google and Yahoo are going to be enforcing, and the deadline for that is February, the first, as you mentioned earlier.

Janice Hostager: 5:34

Okay, I have about a million questions right now for what you just said.

Scott Hartley: 5:37

Oh, I'm sure yeah.

Janice Hostager: 5:39

First of all, I do have the Google business suite and I do send my emails through Google. If Google is implementing this, wouldn't Google make sure that their own platform has this in place?

Scott Hartley: 5:53

Unfortunately not. So the responsibility is on the sender of the email. Okay so, because you actually own your own domain, okay so I'm the one that owns the master plan for success and I'm the one that has access to set up the DNS records, the authentication records. So Google can't do that for me because I'm the one that owns and controls that. And the analogy that I kind of use with that is most of us business owners, we hire an accountant or CPA to take care of our tax returns for us, right, but who does the IRS come back to if there's a problem with our tax return?

Janice Hostager: 6:37

Got to us.

Scott Hartley: 6:38

Because we are the business owners, right, right, even though we may delegate that responsibility to somebody else, and it's kind of the same way in the email world. So Google is making up the rules, just like the IRS does, and the responsibility is upon us, as the business owner, that we comply with those, and so we're responsible for setting those up.

Janice Hostager: 6:59

Okay. So, without getting too complex here, because I understand that we're out of podcasts and we can't really demonstrate a lot of this, what would that look like Now? So I have JaniceHostager.com and MyweeklyMarketing.com as domains, and so let's just go with JaniceHostager.com that is registered. So that is set up through my server, right? So do I need to go and where would I go at this point?

Scott Hartley: 7:36

Great question, and you're not alone. A lot of people are like what the heck do I do here? Where do I go and do this stuff? And it can be a little complex and everything. Basically,

where most likely not in all cases, but most likely where you purchased your domain. So if you bought your domain at GoDaddy or Namecheap or Hostgator, you know someplace like that, that's where you're going to add or change these DNS records. So this is where you would set up that DKIM, the SPF, and the DMARC record and you know. So that's typically where it's going to happen. Now, some people have slightly different setups, but for most people, that's where you would go to make these changes.

Janice Hostager: 8:18

Okay, and that would be the case now. So I use ConvertKit for my email. That would be the case for that as well. So I know that I already set up a DNS record for ConvertKit for my landing pages, but that's a little different than what you're talking about. That's a little different.

Scott Hartley: 8:35

Yeah, that's a little different. You would need to go into ConvertKit to get some information to then plug into, for example, GoDaddy where your DNS records are hosted. So you're going to be working on both platforms to get everything all properly configured.

Janice Hostager: 8:51

Okay, so are the big email service providers such as MailChimp, and Convertkit. You know Active Campaign. Are they providing help for a lot of their clients on this and information, or how have you noticed anything?

Scott Hartley: 9:07

Yeah, many of them are providing some guidance. Unfortunately and I know I'll probably get some flak for saying this, but it's the truth they're only concerned about their platform. They're not providing you holistic advice so that you are completely compliant, and usually what they're providing is the absolute bare minimum and it still leaves you exposed. Okay, oh okay, let me explain what I mean by that. So there's one email service provider that I know very well, one email marketing software platform, and the instructions that they're giving have people set up a very minimalistic DMARC record. Okay, technically, the instructions that they provide do make you compliant if you're doing a small volume of email sends, but it's not providing you the best protection. And the reason why I say that is that they are not advising their customers to set up reporting for DMARC. Now, the R in DMARC stands for reporting, so by default it generates reports and those reports are very important to be monitored and looked at on a regular basis. And the instructions that they're giving their clients don't tell them about the reporting, and so they're leaving them exposed, and this is how they're leaving

them exposed. I have a client that I set up their authentication for a couple of months ago and within a week after we got all of her authentication set up and I monitored her DMARC reports for her I quickly noticed that some hacker or spammer over in the Middle East was sending emails using her domain. She didn't even know it and we wouldn't have known that had we not been monitoring her DMARC reports. Well, of course, all of those emails that that spammer was sending out. People were getting those. Well, what were they doing? Well, they were marking them as spam. Well, guess who that was hurting? That was hurting my client's that was deeming her domain reputation and making it more difficult for her to get her emails delivered, and so we were able to quickly lock down her domain so that that hacker had to go find somebody else's domain to use to send out junk emails from, and now that protected her domain reputation. So, a lot of the advice that you know your email marketing platforms are giving it's okay, but it's not complete. And they're also not telling you that you do need to set up the authentication for your Google Workspace or your Office 365 account. They're just focused solely on you're using convert kit, you're using MailChimp, you're using Keep, you need to set up authentication for our platform, which I understand, but they're not looking at the holistic picture and saying this is everything that you really need to make sure that you have in place.

Janice Hostager: 12:13

Okay, okay, so let's say that we got past the setting up of the DNS records, and so how does one get the reporting in place as well?

Scott Hartley: 12:27

So the reporting is part of how you're configuring your DMARC record, and then typically you want to make sure that you're using a third-party service that receives those reports, because when you get those emails that are generated, they're written in what's called XML, so it's kind of a web programming code, so it's hard to decipher when you just look at it. But there are services out there that can receive those reports. They parse all of that data and then they put it into a usable format: charts, graphs, and tables that you can actually then realistically use and figure out. You know like, oh, we've got a problem here, and so that's how you would do that.

Janice Hostager: 13:09

Okay, and do you have some recommendations as to who would provide something like that?

Scott Hartley: 13:14

There are a lot of different services out there. You know there's DMARC in, there's DMARC Digest, a postmark app I offer service. So there's a lot of different places that can, you know, help you, you know, analyze those reports.

Janice Hostager: 13:30

Okay, okay, we'll put some links to that in the show notes too.

Scott Hartley: 13:34

Yeah, and the important part is not just having the reports coming from somewhere, but it's actually looking at those reports, right? So I mean, it's one thing like oh, I feel safe, I've got my DMARC and it's generating reports, but if you're not looking at those, it's not, you're not going to know that you've got any problems.

Janice Hostager: 13:51

So, on these reports, it would let us know if there's an issue going on and how would we spot something like that if there's a sender from a different country, kind of thing, or it's probably a little bit beyond the scope of what we have to cover in this podcast. Okay.

Scott Hartley: 14:07

You know it's kind of the technical aspect of it, but there are indicators. It's not going to just initiate an alert, but there are certain things that you can look for in the DMARC reports. You know the tables that it gives you. That's going to help you decipher, like oh, that's not a platform that I'm sending emails from.

Janice Hostager: 14:26

So do these reporting services. Do they often have red flags in certain areas that say, hey, pay attention to this? For people that just don't spend their life in the computer industry and don't understand a lot of this and aren't necessarily techie, I'm just wondering if there's a way to flag some things that they should be looking for or don't you? I suppose it depends on the platform.

Scott Hartley: 14:49

It kind of depends on the platform, but most often, almost all of those platforms have a section called non-compliant emails and that's going to be kind of the first place to look and be like oh okay, we've got some emails that are not compliant with the DMARC rules, and so that's kind of the first place that you would look.

Janice Hostager: 15:08

Well, that sounds like a lot in itself, but you said that's only part of what's happening here. It's only part of it.

Scott Hartley: 15:13

Yeah, it's a very important part, and setting up that authentication is really, really important. The second rule that they're going to be heavily enforcing in 2024 involves email engagement. So a lot of people just send out emails to their list but they're not paying attention to who's actually opening and clicking on their emails. And some people get a large number of spam complaints. So you may have people on your list that maybe they opted in six months or a year ago or maybe even longer, and then they haven't been opening your emails. And then all of a sudden they see your email and they open it and then they're like you don't remember how did I get on Janice's list? Like who is she? What is she doing? I don't want to get this anymore. And instead of doing the nice thing and scrolling to the bottom and clicking unsubscribe, they use the easy button report to spam. Now you start to get in trouble because the spam threshold that Google and Yahoo are going to be really enforcing is one spam complaint for every thousand emails that you send. If you've got a really small list, one spam complaint can put you in some serious hot water, right? So if you have like 200 people on your list, you can't really even afford to get one spam complaint. So that's where you really need to be looking at your engagement of your list and stop emailing the people who have not been opening or clicking on your emails for 90 days or longer, right, so that's going to be a rule that they're going to be really strictly enforcing, because they don't want to get a lot of spam complaints from people who forget how they got on your list or they don't want to be on your list any longer, but they just don't hit the unsubscribe link.

Janice Hostager: 17:06

Right. That's also a good reason to email your list on a regular basis, say weekly, for example, because then they're going to be familiar with you and they're going to be less likely to say, oh, this is spam, or how did I get on your list, kind of thing. And yeah, I get a lot of those just recently, actually just a lot of emails that I have no memory of subscribing to, but it was maybe for free download, to be honest, and then you didn't hear from them again. So there's also ways to do a campaign where you can kind of re-engage your audience as well. Right, you can send out some emails that say, hey, you want to stay on the list, Click here. And oftentimes we can incentivize that by getting a free checklist or something if they want to stay on your list and, if not, make it really easy to unsubscribe. Just put a big button in the middle if that's what it takes. But that's really an important thing now. I think in the past we sort of tried to encourage people to stay on the list, even if they weren't maybe actively engaged. So I think now correct me if I'm wrong, but that's another rule that they're enforcing now too. It's one- click

unsubscribe, no more like email me if you want to be off my list, or click a button and then you have to put your email address in and you're like okay, which email address do I use for this?

Scott Hartley: 18:36

one.

Janice Hostager: 18:37

So there's a lot of hoops that are no longer going to cut it with Google.

Scott Hartley: 18:43

Yeah, that one-click unsubscribe is really important. And if you're using a platform like convert kit active campaign, keep MailChimp. That's already built into those platforms, so most people will be compliant with that. But you just double-check to and make sure and make it super easy for people to get off of your list, like yesterday. I actually consulted with two different businesses and they're like how can we make it easier for people to get off of our list? And the recommendation that I'm giving is at the very top of the email, put in a text block that says if you no longer want to hear about this or if you no longer want to receive my emails, click this link and we'll remove you from this series of emails, whatever that is. And that way it gives people right up front an easy way to stop receiving a set of emails from you and that will keep them from clicking that. Report a spam button.

Janice Hostager: 19:40

Right, right, okay, so I've started from my own list, and for people that clients that I have a re-engagement campaign, but you mentioned 90 days as a window. Do you feel like that's a good window for people if they haven't engaged with you in 90 days, that's a time to maybe say or just manually delete them, or do you? What are your thoughts on how to go about doing that?

Scott Hartley: 20:07

Yeah, a lot of them. It depends on how frequently you're emailing. But again, like you've suggested, weekly is best. So if you are emailing weekly, when somebody gets to the 90-day point, that's when I usually run them through a re-engagement campaign and then say you know, hey, we'd love to keep you on our list and provide value to you, but if you're not interested in it longer, feel free to opt-out here, you know, give them the opportunity to move out. Then if they don't reengage from that series of reengagement emails, then automatically opt them out. And you know that the pruning process of your list, a lot of people shutter the idea of that, but it's so important. So, just like you know, if

you've got a garden you know I don't, you know I don't do a lot of gardening, but people who do that they say to keep their plants growing and thriving, they have to cut off all of the dead stalks and stems and everything and that allows them to blossom and thrive. And it's the same with your email list. If you've got a lot of people who aren't opening and clicking on your emails, they're actually hurting your ability to get the emails delivered to the people who do want to hear from you. So the pruning process is very important to keep your email list growing, even though you know you may not have 5,000 people on your list, but you've got 500 people who absolutely want to consume your content.

Janice Hostager: 21:31

Right, right, and that is hard for a small business owner and you're pruning off people that you know that haven't been engaging with you. It really is the best thing to do and it does hurt, you know, to see that number drop, and it happens to all of us. I mean, we all have people on our list that are not engaging, that or maybe it's just going to their spam folder straight up, you know because they haven't been engaging. And, as you said in our earlier episode, the big email delivery platforms, such as Gmail, pay attention to people who are engaging and not engaging. So a lot of this go ahead.

Scott Hartley: 22:11

Yeah, one thing that you just mentioned that I'm by that you said is that you know maybe your emails are just going straight into their junk or spam folder, so they don't engage because they don't see your email. Having your authentication fully and properly set up, that can help get those emails going to the inbox, because, especially Microsoft right now, they are the hardest email provider to get your emails delivered to, and so because they look heavily at authentication, do you have DKIM, SPF and DMARC properly set up? And so, if you don't, there's a good chance your emails are going to the junk folder to those recipients, whereas when you get the authentication set up now, your emails will go into their inbox. So you might even see an uptick. Just by getting your authentication in place, you may see more people engaging because whoa, they're getting your emails, which is a good thing.

Janice Hostager: 23:07

That's a great thing, yeah, so delivery deliverability increases once you get that sent up typically.

Scott Hartley: 23:13

Okay, absolutely.

Janice Hostager: 23:14

Okay, so I think we hit on three of them. So what's the first four?

Scott Hartley: 23:21

Yeah, the last one, and this doesn't affect a lot of people, but you might have some in your audience that do, especially if they are a startup or a small business. A lot of people will send emails using ConvertKit and Mailchimp keep different platforms using a free Gmail. com account or a free Hotmail. com, so the email might come from Scott at Gmail. com because they're small and they don't want to invest in their own domain, you know, as they're kind of getting started. Well, come February the 1st, you will no longer be able to send emails using an automation platform from a free email address. It must come from your own branded domain that you own and that you control. Okay, so in my case it would need to be a Master Plan for Success. In your case, it would be JaniceHostager. com. Right, you must send it from that type of address. You cannot use Gmail. com to send emails from. So that's going to be very important. Again, that's a minority of people, but it will catch a good number of people off guard, because I've already consulted with several, especially using MailChimp, that have been using Gmail accounts and they're going to have to make that change.

Janice Hostager: 24:41

So when you're setting up their account, it's not that they're registering with a Gmail account, it's that they have that. You have an option when you go in there to select what email account it comes from, correct, okay, and some people may have like info at JaniceHostager. com, for example, so that they don't get a lot of bounce backs coming to their regular main email account. But that's still okay as long as the domain is attached to that email address.

Scott Hartley: 25:15

Correct, as long as the domain is attached. As long as it's not Gmail. com, hotmail. com, yahoo. com. As long as it's something that you purchased domain you purchased that will put you in compliance.

Janice Hostager: 25:31

Okay, this is a lot. It really is Go ahead.

Scott Hartley: 25:36

So many nuances to everything here and it can be overwhelming right, I mean like some of your listeners here are probably like, oh my gosh, this is just like crazy nuts, and realistically for the average user it's probably not something they should try to do on

their own, you know because, the problem is that with these authentication records, especially if you make one minor mistake, if you have a typo, if you leave a character out, if you add an extra character, if you have something in the wrong place, if you have duplicates, if you have two SPF records, for example, that will put you out of compliance. And so making sure that these things are set up properly and correctly is really, really important, because just that one minor mistake can create a whole world of problems. So if you're not comfortable doing this, it's best to engage an expert you know to help you, you know, get this all taken care of.

Janice Hostager: 26:38

Hmm, okay, that's good to know. Yeah, you kind of got me almost ready to reach for a paper bag to breathe into here, because I feel like I used to design websites, so I have some idea of what happens on both the server side and the you know, the back end of sites. But you're right. If you know it's easy to make an error in something like that, and if you're not comfortable with tech and a lot of people are not then you're right. So now you are obviously an expert, and so I can put your contact information in our show notes for today too. But do you have some sort of a guide that people can download to get more information about how to start this whole process, or yeah?

Scott Hartley: 27:22

So actually I've got three things that I will give you links to that people can go and get. So one is a checklist. So it's a simple one- page checklist that you can look at and it's going to give you six things on that checklist that you need to make sure that you're compliant with, and you can put a check in the box like yes, I know for sure that I'm good to go there. Or maybe a question mark. I'm not too sure about the items that you have a question mark on. Then I'm going to also offer a free authentication check. So with the link in your show notes people can go to that. And basically, you'll just give me like two or three pieces of information and then I can let you know for certain are your one- to- one and your email marketing software, are you fully compliant or are there a couple of things that you need to get fixed so that you are fully compliant? And then obviously I can, you know, help out with that if somebody would want me to take care of it for them. The third thing that I will also give you is I've written a fact sheet, so I've asked, you know, put in there like what are the common questions that I've been asked, some of the questions that you've asked today, and I've answered those in an easily understandable way where it's not overly complicated. It's not complex because just listening to this podcast episode like you're probably not going to understand all of this, but you can see it in writing, you can go back and read it again and again to kind of get it if you need to.

So I'll give you that resource as well and that way, you know, people can really understand what they need to be compliant with come February 1st.

Janice Hostager: 29:04

Oh, there's so much to learn here and such great information. I mean because there are people that have not heard about this at all and are really going to be negatively affected by it, and so I'm so glad that you decided to come on our show today and tell us more about this. I really, really appreciate it and I will definitely be downloading your checklist and all your all that you have to offer, because this affects all of us, for sure. So thank you so much, Scott. Yeah, so tell us how can people get in touch with you. I'll put the links in the show notes, but if you have some, tell us how people can reach you.

Scott Hartley: 29:43

Yeah, I mean, if somebody wants to just shoot me an email, Scott at Masterplan, the number for success. com. So Scott at masterplanforsuccess.com. If you've got questions, you know, feel free to shoot those over to me. However, the easiest way, and probably the most comprehensive way for me to guide you is by getting your free authentication check like I can give you specific answers right off of that and you'll be in good shape to know what you need to do or like hey, you're good to go, you don't have to worry about anything. So you know and this is overwhelming. But here's the thing Don't let it like upset the way that you're doing things. Don't look at this as like a huge disaster. Here's some good news about this. So there's a huge opportunity. Everybody who actually gets compliant by the end of January, guess what your emails are gonna start landing in the inbox. This affects every business globally, millions of businesses. There are going to be thousands upon thousands, upon thousands of businesses who one? Who've never heard about this? This is gonna completely catch them off guard. Or, number two, they're gonna say I'm not gonna worry about it and they're not gonna take action. Their emails are gonna go to junk or spam or not get delivered at all. But if you take action, guess what You're gonna show up in the inbox your emails will get seen, they'll get open, and people will buy from you. They'll go visit your website. Whatever your call to action is, you can have less competition because so many people aren't doing what needs to be done, and that's exactly what Google and Yahoo want, because there's so much spam out there. So the opportunity is huge. Like, google and Yahoo are handing you business on a silver platter, if they take the actions that they outline. And if you're not comfortable in taking the actions, get an expert to do it for you, so that you can reap the rewards of this unparalleled opportunity that only comes a few times in a business life.

Janice Hostager: 32:01

In a lifetime, yeah, yes. Well, that is good news, a good way to look at it. So thank you so much, Scott. I sure appreciate all the wisdom you shared today and I look forward to getting your checklist.

Scott Hartley: 32:13

Sounds great. I'll send that over.

Janice Hostager: 32:15

All right, all right. So what do you think? It's kind of a lot, isn't it? If you're anything like me, you might be a little confused and overwhelmed by all of it. So I want to encourage you to take Scott up on his offer for a free checklist FAQ sheet and his free authentication check. I updated all that. I thought it was necessary for my own business. Then I went through his checking process and found that my Google Workspace account was not compliant, even though I thought it was. So for me, his authentication check really paid off. You can find those links on the show notes page at [myweeklymarketing.com board, slash 40](https://myweeklymarketing.com/board/slash-40). Also, you may have heard that these guidelines are only for companies who are bulk senders, who send out more than 2000 emails a day. After our interview, I asked Scott that question and he said quote these rules apply to all senders. Yahoo doesn't reveal what they consider a bulk sender. It could be 100 emails or 1000 emails a day, so it's better to have all authentication fully in place. I agree. I want to make sure that my business is compliant and up to date. I know you want the same for your own business. I'll also include a video in my show notes of how I verified my domain with my email service provider, which is ConvertKit, and if I get a chance to create more videos before this episode airs, I'll add them too. So again, you can find all this information on my show notes page at [myweeklymarketing.com board, slash 40](https://myweeklymarketing.com/board/slash-40). So that's it for today. As always, I sure appreciate you joining us. Thank you again. See you next time. Bye for now.