

Measuring Deliverability with the First and the Subsequent Email Message

This study investigates how initial inbox placement affects the deliverability and threading of follow-up emails in G Suite and MS365 environments. We tested whether a successful first send guarantees that any subsequent message in the same thread - regardless of content, timing, or format - will continue to maintain thread continuity and constant placement in the inbox.



About Warmy and the Research Team

Warmy is the leading email deliverability technology, helping businesses improve their inbox placement, sender reputation, and overall email performance. Powered by AI-driven strategies.

The Warmy Research Team is a dedicated group of email deliverability-certified experts focused on analyzing and optimizing email-sending practices.

Through continuous testing, data-driven insights, and innovative methodologies, they uncover factors that impact deliverability and translate findings into actionable improvements for Warmy's platform. Their expertise helps businesses navigate the complexities of email deliverability with confidence.



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Key findings

- **GSuite “Gatekeeper Effect”:** A follow-up landing in spam breaks the thread; marking it “Not Spam” reunites it.
- **GSuite Sensitivities:** Minor template tweaks or very short send intervals can flip a follow-up from inbox to spam.
- **MS365 Reliability:** If the first message lands in the inbox, all follow-ups inherit inbox placement and thread continuity.
- **MS365 Recovery:** Even if the first message lands in spam, minor content variations or adjusted send cadence can restore inbox placement and threading.
- **Platform Differences:** GSuite requires ongoing content and timing management after the first send; MS365 primarily hinges on that very first placement.

Research Technical Details

- **Sender Configuration:** OpenSRS-hosted SMTP
- **Recipient Profiles:** 5 unique GSuite mailboxes and 5 unique MS365 mailboxes
- **Email Variations:**
 - a. Neutral “Email 1” send
 - b. Identical “Email 2” follow-up
 - c. “Email 2” with minor wording changes
 - d. “Email 2” sent at a very short interval after Email 1
 - e. (MS365 only) Template variation applied to both Email 1 and Email 2
- **Measurement Tools:** Manual verification in inbox/spam folders; Gmail API “Not Spam” actions; placement tracking via Warmy’s Placement Checker

Methodology

Phase 1 – Initial Sends:

- Dispatch Email 1 to all test mailboxes; record placement.

Phase 2 – Follow-Up Tests:

- Send Email 2 (identical template) and log its placement.
- Repeat with minor template changes.
- Repeat with a rapid send interval.
- (MS365 only) Repeat both sends with template variations on both.

Thread Verification:

- Observe whether Email 2 appears in the same thread as Email 1.
- For GSuite spam cases, mark as “Not Spam” and note thread restoration.

Data Aggregation:

- Tabulate outcomes by platform, test condition, and threading behavior.

Results

Gsuite

Condition	Email 1	Email 2	Threading
Identical Templates	Inbox	Spam	Broken; reunites on "Not Spam"
Minor Template Variation	Spam	Inbox	Thread starts at reply only
Short Interval & High Similarity	Inbox	Spam	Broken despite healthy first send

- **Content Sensitivity:** Even slight wording changes flip follow-up placement.
- **Cadence Impact:** Rapid succession elevates spam risk.

MS365

Scenario	Email 1	Email 2	Threading
Initial Good Placement	Inbox	Inbox	Continuous in-thread delivery
Initial Bad Placement	Spam	Spam	Separate threads, both in spam
Adjusted Send Tempo	Inbox	Inbox	Restores in-thread delivery
Template Variation Recovery	Inbox	Inbox	Minor tweaks recover inbox/thread

- **First-Message Dominance:** The inbox status of Email 1 drives all follow-ups.
- **Template & Tempo Levers:** Content tweaks and pacing can remedy initial spam placement.

Conclusion

Our research set out to test the hypothesis that once an initial email in a thread successfully lands in the inbox, virtually any follow-up message, regardless of content, timing, or format, will continue to arrive in that same inbox thread. The results differ by platform:

- **MS365:** The hypothesis is largely confirmed. If the very first message lands in the inbox, subsequent replies consistently inherit that placement and appear in the same thread, even when content or send cadence is varied. Moreover, minor template tweaks and pacing adjustments can recover a thread if the first message initially lands in spam.
- **GSuite:** The hypothesis holds only partially. While a first message in the inbox does establish a thread, follow-up placement remains sensitive to both content (small wording changes can flip placement) and send cadence (rapid sequential sends can trigger spam filters). Thus, unlike MS365, you cannot follow up with “anything in any way, shape, or form” without risking a thread break.

In practical terms, this means:

- For **MS365** campaigns, securing that initial inbox placement is the single most critical factor—once achieved, follow-ups will reliably stay in that thread.
- For **GSuite**, you must both win that first placement and carefully manage your follow-up content and timing. Content optimization (subject/body tweaks) and controlled intervals are required to preserve thread continuity.

By understanding these platform-specific behaviors, senders can tailor their strategies, prioritizing a strong first send on both platforms, then leveraging MS365’s forgiving threading while applying more nuanced content and cadence controls for GSuite.



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