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April 2025

Identifying MS365 Blocking Conditions for Sender Accounts

This report dives into the underlying causes behind email deliverability challenges - examining how sudden volume spikes, varying content formats, and domain configuration impact sender reputation and trigger blocks. It presents a detailed analysis of controlled warm-up strategies across multiple flows, using MS365 as the sender and targeting major providers like Gmail and G Suite. The findings outline actionable strategies to prevent blocks and optimize outreach, ensuring that your email campaigns consistently land 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.

Daniel Shnaider
Deliverability Expert

Alexandr Panchenko
Technical Deliverability Expert

Vahagn Shirinyan
Senior Deliverability Expert

Max Popov
Senior Deliverability Expert

Oleksiy Lutskin
Deliverability Expert

Artem Klymenko
Deliverability Expert

Bohdan Tsapenko
Head of Research Team

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The Warmy.io team

Key findings

- **Moderate Volume Warm-Up is Effective:**

Gradually increasing sending volume from around 100 to 300 emails per day appears to build sender reputation without triggering blocks. Please note that the actual volume figures might differ from ESP to ESP.

- **High-Volume Starts are Risky:**

Abruptly starting with high volumes (e.g., 1000–2000 emails/day) immediately triggers filtering mechanisms, leading to blocks.

- **Light HTML Content Provides Stability:**

Emails with light HTML formatting tend to achieve steady deliverability, particularly for providers like G Suite.

- **Rich HTML Shows Early Volatility:**

While Rich HTML emails eventually stabilize, they exhibit more fluctuations in placement rates during the early warm-up phase.

- **Combined Targeting Requires Extra Caution:**

Sending emails from MS365 to both Gmail and G Suite results in some mid-flow variability, highlighting the importance of ongoing monitoring when addressing multiple providers simultaneously.

- **No Correlation Between Template Type and Volume Blocking:**

We have not identified any significant correlations between the template type and the sending volume that leads to blocks. For example, sending 25 rich HTML emails does not appear to carry a higher risk of blockage than sending 50 light HTML emails.

Research Technical Details

- **Domains & Configuration:**

Multiple domains were set up in separate MS365 workspaces to avoid reputation overlap.

- **Sender & Receiver Setup:**

MS365 accounts were used exclusively as senders while recipients came from various providers (Gmail, G Suite, Outlook, Yahoo, Zoho, etc.) to capture diverse feedback.

- **Warm-Up Schedules:**

Each flow followed a structured 4-week ramp-up period with daily email volume increases (ranging from 50–200 emails/day for some flows and up to 300 emails/day in moderate tests).

- **Monitoring Tools:**

MS SNDS was the primary tool for tracking reputation and block events, supplemented by placement checkers like Warmy and additional logging tools.

Methodology

Flows Tested:

- **Flow 1: Baseline Volume Warm-Up**
  - Establishes baseline deliverability using controlled volume increases from MS365 senders.
  - Includes sub-flows:
    - **Flow 1.1:** Moderate volume ramp-up (100–300 emails/day)
    - **Flow 1.2:** High volume attempt (1000–2000 emails/day), which was blocked from the start due to the sheer volume.
    - **Flow 1.3:** Low volume ramp-up (0–100 emails/day)

- **Flow 2: Email Content Variation**
  - Evaluates the impact of content formatting on deliverability by comparing:
    - **Flow 2.1:** Light HTML emails (basic formatting with links)
    - **Flow 2.2:** Rich HTML emails (including images, tables, and advanced formatting)
  - Aims to understand how content complexity influences placement and sender reputation.

Senders & Receivers:

- **Senders:**
  - All flows use MS365 accounts as senders, with each domain configured in a separate MS365 workspace to maintain independent reputations.
- **Receivers:**
  - Emails are targeted to a diverse set of recipient domains including Gmail, GSuite, Outlook, and others to simulate real-world variability.

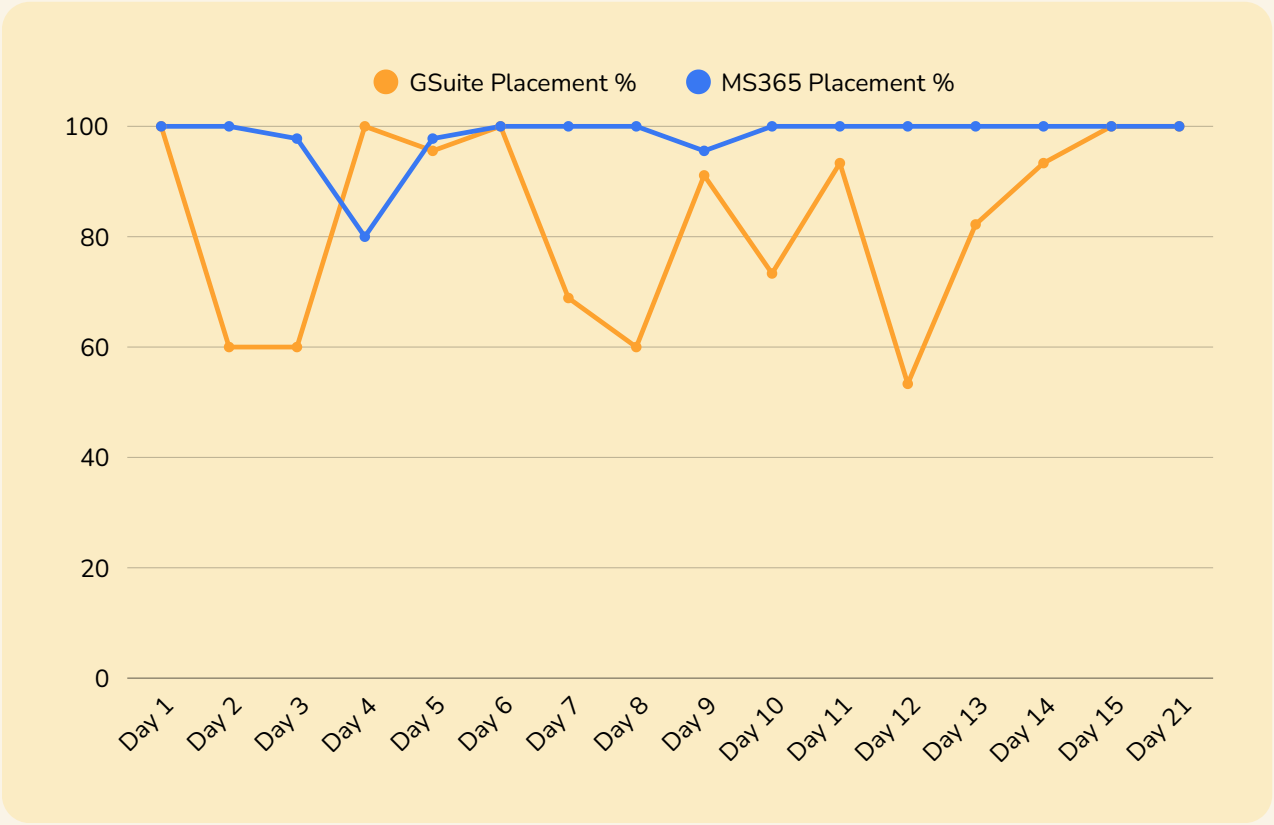
- **Tools:**
  - MS SNDS: Monitors sender reputation, block events, and error codes.
  - Additional Logging (e.g., MX Toolbox): Record send volumes, timing, and bounce rates.
- **Metrics:**
  - Delivery Metrics: Daily inbox vs. spam placement rates.
  - Bounce Rates & Error Codes: Identification of blocking thresholds.
  - Reputation Trends & Volume: Continuous monitoring of reputation scores alongside send volume and schedule adherence.

Results

- **Flow 1.1 (Volume-Based):**
  - **Overview:** This chart compares GSuite and MS365 placement trends over a 4-week period where the sending volume is increased from 100 to 300 emails per day.

  - **Observations:**
    - MS365: Remains nearly perfect at ~100% placement across all days.
    - GSuite: Shows early fluctuations with some dips (around 60%) but generally improves over time.

  - **Implication:** A moderate warm-up successfully avoids block events, particularly for MS365, while GSuite's initial variability suggests some sensitivity to sending volume or frequency changes. We suspect that the MS365 provider "trusts" outside ESPs less, therefore we are seeing the following picture

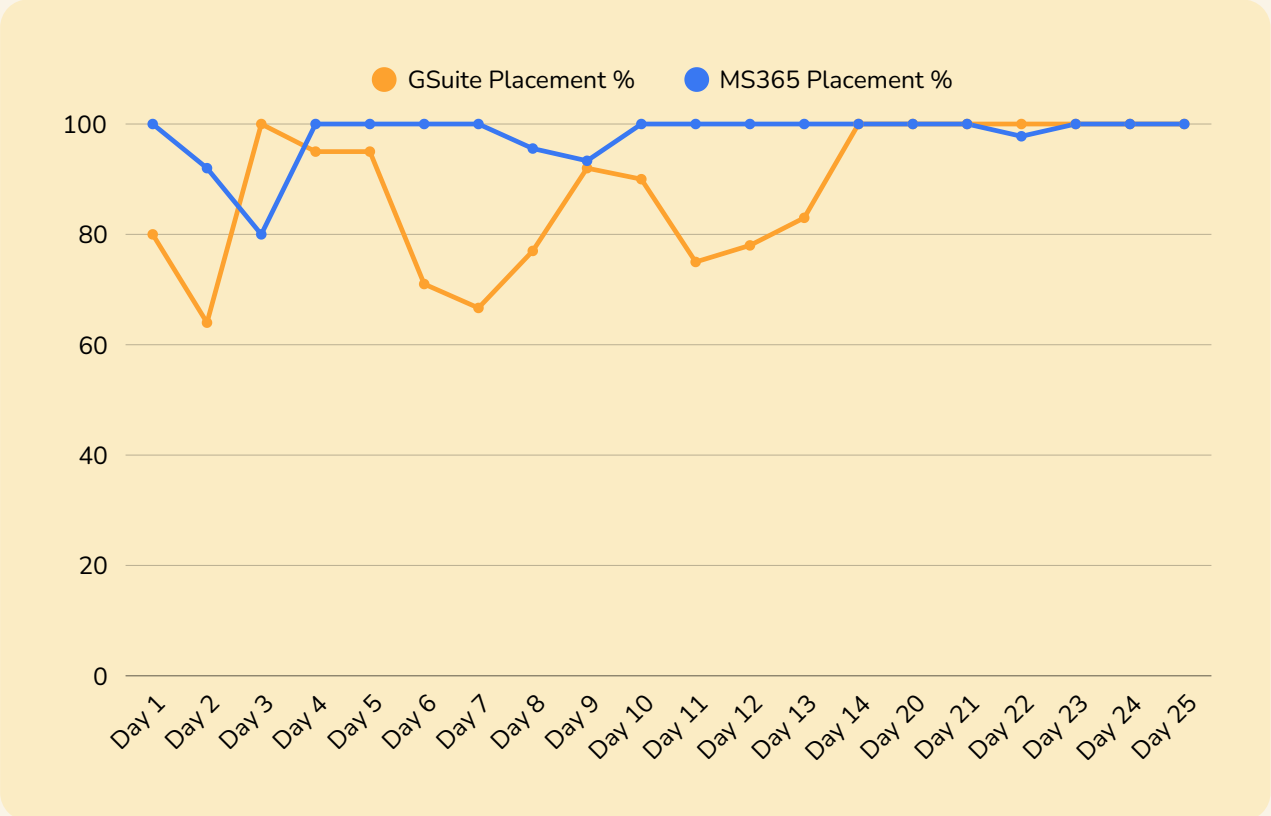


*Note: Deliverability stabilized after Day 21.

- **Flow 1.3 (Volume-Based):**
  - **Overview:** This chart shows the placement trends for GSuite and MS365 during a lower volume campaign where the sending volume gradually increases from about 25 to 100 emails per day.

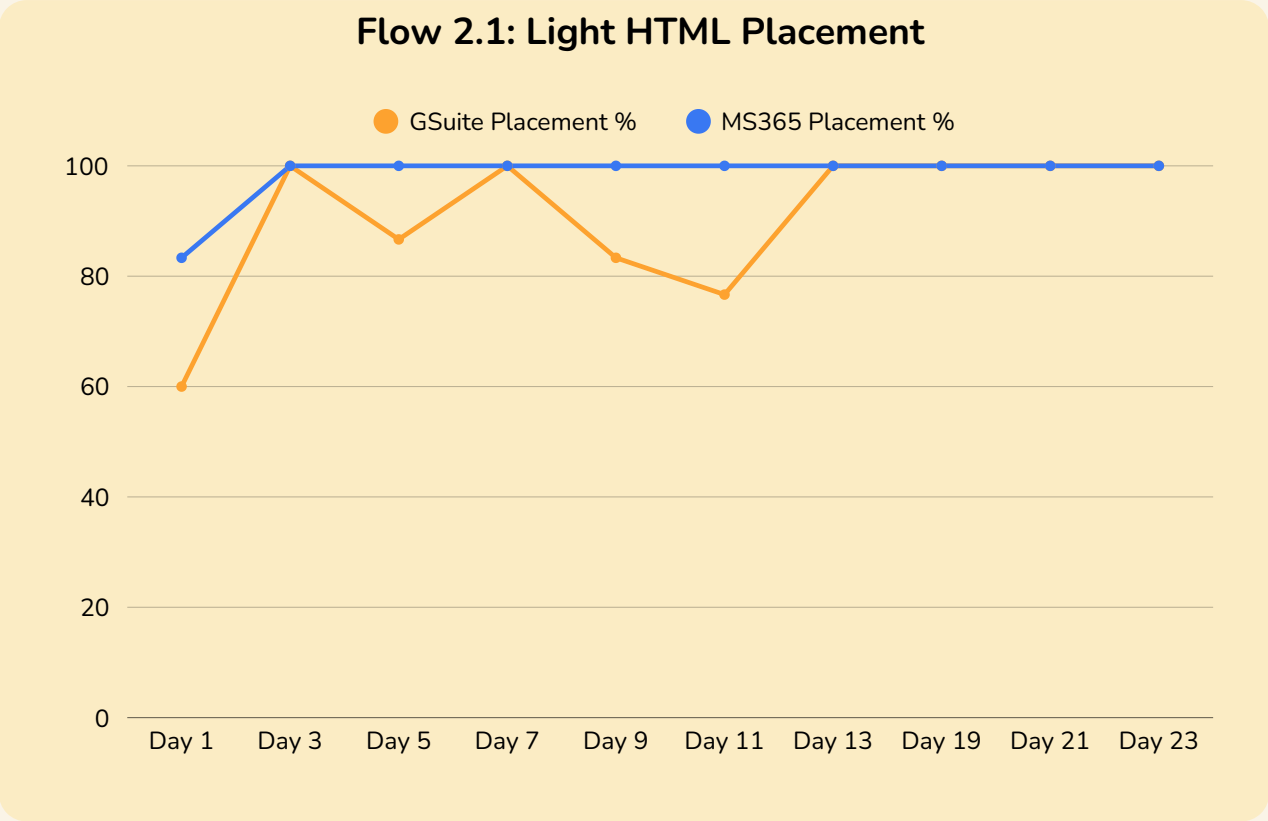
  - **Observations:**
    - MS365: Consistently shows ~100% placement, confirming its robustness with gradual increases.
    - GSuite: Demonstrates volatility, however, it fluctuates less than in the Flow 1.1 and gains good better placement with faster gains as well.

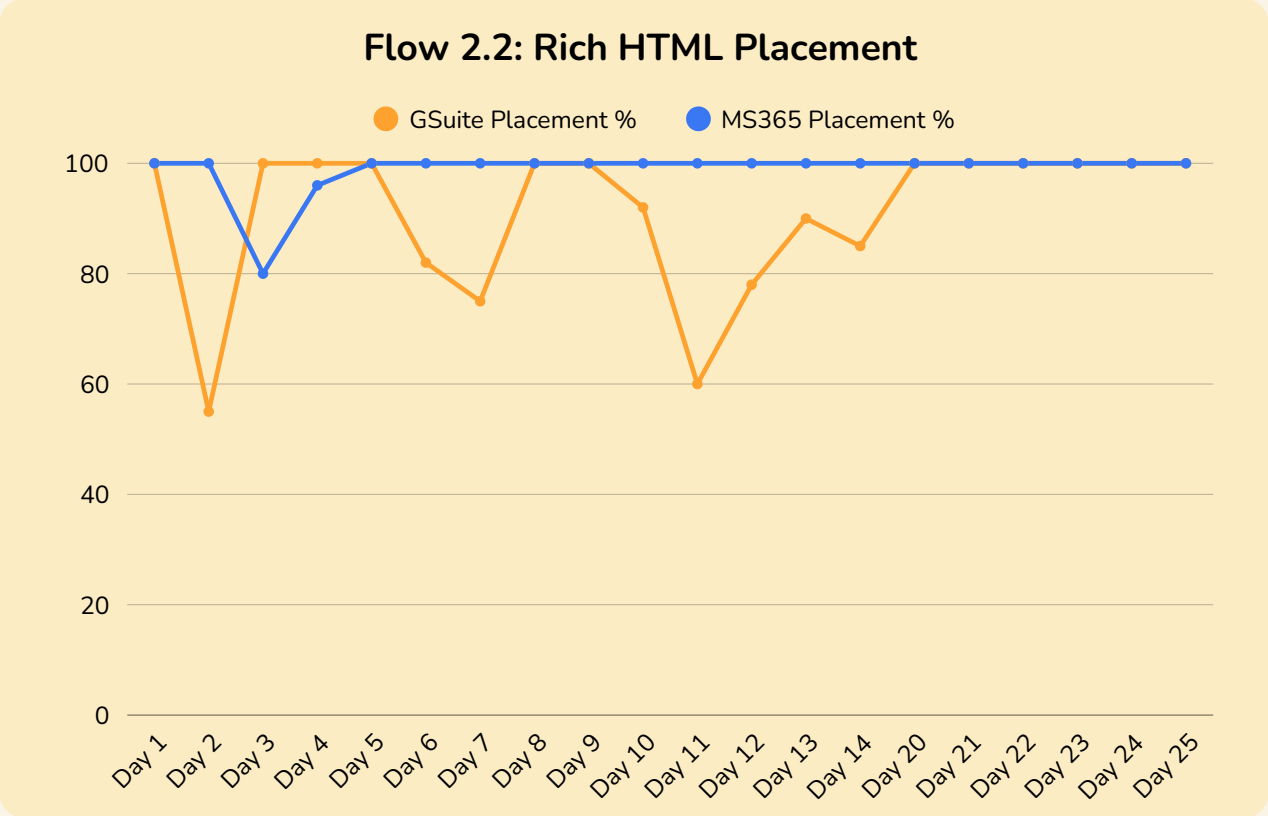
  - **Implication:** Although low-volume sending keeps MS365 stable, it can lead to erratic results on other platforms, suggesting that while low-volume warm-ups may be safe for MS365, careful monitoring on other providers is necessary. The following also supports the theory, that there is a goldilocks zone in which ESPs are “trusting” other providers more, and this is not necessarily the lowest volume possible.



*Note: Deliverability stabilized after Day 25.

- **Flow 2.1 and 2.2 (Content Variation Impact):**





Flow 2 (Content Variation Impact) Conclusions

- **Content Impact:**
  - While both Light and Rich HTML formats generally achieve high deliverability with MS365, the Light HTML approach produces steadier results, particularly on GSuite. The Rich HTML flow, although eventually stabilizing at high placement rates, exhibits a bit more volatility early on.

- **Provider Sensitivity:**
  - MS365 consistently shows near-perfect delivery in both sub-flows, however, that is to be expected as we used MS365 domains to send those emails in the first place. GSuite, however, appears more sensitive—especially to the complexity of rich content—which is reflected in the observed fluctuations.

- **Strategic Implications:**
  - Given these observations, a Light HTML approach might be preferable during initial campaign warm-ups when stability is critical. However, if engagement and richer content presentation become priority later on, a carefully managed transition to Rich HTML could be justified, provided that the slight early volatility is anticipated and mitigated through monitoring.

- **Volume Correlations:**
  - Also, as advised earlier, we have not identified any consistent link between the type of email template and the volume required to trigger blocks. In other words, sending 25 rich HTML emails does not appear to result in a higher chance of blocking than sending 50 light HTML emails*.

*Note: Volume here is solely provided as an example and can differ in real-world use case.

Conclusion

This research confirms that a measured and gradual warm-up strategy is essential for establishing a strong sender reputation and ensuring high inbox placement. Key insights include:

- **Adopt a Moderate Warm-Up Approach:**

Avoid abrupt changes in sending volume. A steady increase (e.g., 100–300 emails/day; the actual volume might differ from ESP to ESP) allows ESPs to build trust without triggering filters.

- **Monitor Content Strategies Carefully:**

While both Light and Rich HTML formats can achieve high deliverability, starting with Light HTML may provide more consistency initially. Transitioning to Rich HTML can be considered later as sender reputation solidifies.

- **Stay Vigilant with Multi-Provider Campaigns:**

When targeting multiple providers simultaneously (such as Gmail and G Suite), continuous monitoring and adaptive strategies are crucial to maintaining high deliverability.

- **Utilize Robust Monitoring Tools:**

Tools like MS SNDS and Warmy, combined with comprehensive logging, are critical for real-time assessment and troubleshooting of deliverability issues.

By adhering to these strategies and continuously refining your approach based on feedback from targeted providers, you can significantly improve the success of your email outreach campaigns.

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We are passionate about solving email deliverability challenges and making email a reliable channel for every business

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