

How Apple and Google are Going to Affect HCP Email Marketing

Two titans of the technology landscape, Apple and Google, have announced upcoming changes to their platforms that will affect healthcare provider (HCP) email marketing. In this industry update, our email scientists have analyzed these announcements and provide you our assessment and predictions, including steps to take right now.

Apple iOS 15

Last month, Apple announced several new features being introduced in November which will impact email marketing on Apple mobile devices.

The first item launching with this update is **Mailbox Privacy Protection (MPP)**. MPP only applies to email accounts being accessed through the native email app on an Apple phone or tablet. On one hand, more than half of emails opened on a mobile device will occur on an Apple device. However, data since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic shows that more HCPs are opening email on a desktop than they did pre-pandemic. So, while MPP will definitely have an effect on email marketing to HCPs, it is still too early to assess what those lasting changes will be.

MPP will affect three elements of email:

1. **MPP will hide or strip header information that exists in the email code.** Header information is typically code that contains the tracking or tracing information for an email. This header information, is used by email platforms to determine time stamps, geo-location, sender information and, more importantly, recipient information (e.g., blinded email

address), as well as device information. This will make it more difficult to receive some of the advanced metrics about email delivery and engagement.

2. **MPP will pre-load all email content.** Gmail did this same thing several years ago when they began to store the assets of an email, such as images, to regional and local servers near larger metropolitan areas. The challenge is that when the request is made for the assets of an email, the sending platform records this request as an open. When Gmail made this change in early 2014, it created a lot of false open noise. **It took the email industry about six months to adjust** (by identifying the caching servers) and once again get an accurate read on open rates. The difference between what Gmail did and what Apple is proposing is that Gmail pre-loads and caches assets at large servers, while Apple wants to do this at a user level. Therefore, the Gmail solution of identifying caching servers will not work for Apple, as each individual user's device will essentially be its own cache.
3. **MPP will also strip or block the query strings attached to analytics pixels.** One of the strengths of email is the level of detail returned in post-campaign analytics. This has been achieved by using fairly

complex image pixels. Apple is taking aim at these types of pixels, specifically by blocking the header information from being shared with the pixel and blocking the query strings that would transmit that data and additional information. Again, this will make it more difficult to receive some of the advanced metrics about email delivery and engagement.

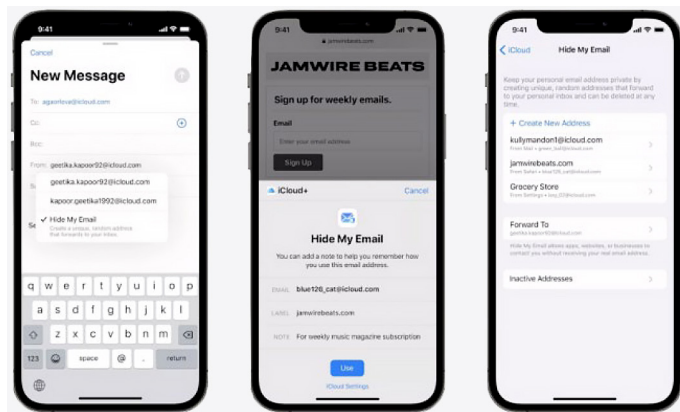
Much is still unknown about MPP. A public beta was just released, and our email experts have begun researching and dissecting. Additionally, the topic of MPP has received a lot of press coverage from across the email marketing landscape – and our IQVIA email scientists are analyzing it all. Our team has also met with our counterparts at the leading ESPs and email vendors such as Litmus. **At this time, we believe the worst-case scenario is the loss of certain information about email engagement through Apple’s native mail app and the need to assess and filter out the new noise of non-human opens.**

One prominent message coming from the email world in the wake of this news is that the potential loss of an accurate read of opens on Apple devices is a “good thing” as it will cause us to look at deeper engagement metrics. Some have even called the open rate a “vanity metric.” But, as with most things, there is nuance here that is overlooked; IQVIA believes open rates are a great directional metric to help understand the success of an email, such as if subject lines, pre-headers, and from lines are resonating with the audience. Open rates are especially important to healthcare marketing as, unlike e-commerce emails, healthcare emails often stand on their own with regards to conveying a complete message, whether it’s clinical data with charts and graphs or an important announcement about a new facility at a regional health system.

Though some email marketers are declaring open rate dead, it is not. Healthcare marketers will still see an accurate open rate from all other segments of their HCP audiences. The data from these segments will also still be more than enough to establish the directional data needed to determine the strength of subject lines, pre-headers and from lines.

The second item Apple is introducing with iOS 15 is **Hide My Email (HME)**. This new feature will be available to any Apple users with a subscription iCloud account, whether it is the \$1/month version or \$10/month version. When enabled, a user will have an option to hide their email address by creating, “on the fly,” an email address that will act as a relay and forward any messages sent to it to the actual inbox. This “burner email address” is an available option whether signing up for something on the web or replying to an email. At any time, a user can also shut down the relay. There is no limit to the number of relays that can be created; a user may have several email relays and, as long as they are active, the relays can be reused.

Examples of how HME might be used. (CNET)



What’s the expected impact? Paying Apple iCloud users will no longer be required to trade their actual email address for a good or service. However, we expect that HCP iCloud users will continue to use their real email address with organizations that provide highly valuable goods or services, or that are trusted partners. Any organizations providing temporary value or that are deemed less trustworthy by HCPs, will likely get an HCP’s burner email address. As a result, you may start to see iCloud relays in your first-party data pool.

What can marketers do? First, a strong database of **valid and authenticated email addresses** for your healthcare audience is more important than ever. Second, healthcare marketers need to show **real value and build trust** with physician audiences. If this isn’t already a central tenet of your marketing plans, it needs to become one.

Google Chrome

On June 24th, a sigh of relief was heard from the programmatic advertising world – and marketers everywhere – when Google announced they would push back deprecation of third-party cookies in their Chrome browser until 2023. While it would be easy to pause all plans under the belief that there are two more years before marketers need to worry about the loss of cookies, in reality, the new timeline features a gradual ramp up to a cookie-less world. Rather than two years, the reprieve likely only bought marketers an extra eight months to prepare. [Now is still the time to get a calculated plan in place to prepare for cookie deprecation](#) and to place as many first-party cookies as possible. Leveraging a technology such as IQVIA's Audience Identity Manager XR (AIM XR) on your websites will also help you obtain physician-level data for insight generation and to guide your marketing and content efforts.

IQVIA is ready to help

Email is a resilient channel. Time and time again we've seen how email adapts to changes in technology, as well as changes in user behavior. As always, IQVIA will continue to ensure our clients and partners successfully achieve their email marketing goals.

Using our industry expertise and ongoing research, we are evolving our solutions and methodologies as the technology evolves in order to help our clients best adapt their strategies and continue achieving their engagement goals. [Contact us](#) today to learn how we can help you.