



It's Time to **Ditch Your** **ESP**

Why a Robust Customer
Marketing Platform is the
Solution Super Senders Need



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Introduction

At first glance, it may seem strange for MessageGears to create a guide for how to leave email service providers, given that we've built our reputation for close to a decade on providing the best email service to data-focused enterprise customers. Of course, email — and related channels such as mobile push and SMS — aren't any less essential to your business than they've been for 20+ years. On the contrary, investing in the right cross-channel marketing tools has never been more important, with inboxes overflowing and mobile phones blowing up with promotions, and the need to stand out in a crowded marketplace being at the forefront of the minds of so many enterprise Marketing leaders.

But what we've learned from thousands of conversations with those leaders, who are trying valiantly to work with tools that simply weren't built to meet their messaging needs, is that ESPs just aren't doing the job those Marketing teams need them to do. It's too hard to get access to the data that's essential for personalization. It's too hard to stay nimble, with rigid sets of data fields that require weeks to change if they can be changed at all. It takes far too long to change to a new one. Onboarding takes forever — some enterprise brands have taken as much as five years! And customer support is basically non-existent.

- **Migration:** Days rather than months and years
- **Customer service:** 24/7 access to dedicated representative rather than a struggle to get anyone to help
- **Data access:** Direct, real-time access behind your firewall rather than a stale copy of data within your ESP's marketing cloud
- **Scale:** Designed specifically with enterprise scale in mind rather than stretching to try to keep up as customer records increase

What's the alternative? A best-in-breed customer marketing platform that specializes in cross-channel

messaging for enterprise customers, living wherever your data lives in order to enable you to build highly personalized campaigns using your live, real-time data. MessageGears' suite of products — Segment, Message, and Engage — is designed specifically to solve the problems of large, data-centric brands that recognize the numerous shortcomings of legacy ESPs and understand that they need a messaging solution that caters to them rather than the midmarket.

Because the needs are different at the enterprise level. And you should seek out a solution that's been built with a laser focus on meeting those needs, not on trying to appeal to every company in existence. That's inevitably going to lead to focusing on the needs of the midmarket, and probably not even satisfying those particularly well. It's time to face it: your ESP is never going to be able to do what you need it to do. That's because, as we'll explain, it's built in such a way that it couldn't even if they decided they wanted to.

And what's more is they don't.

In the following pages, we'll explain why we do, how we're built differently from the ground up, and give you some general tips on how to handle a platform change. We're passionate about what we do, and about solving our customers' problems. We hope that will come across here, and that it shows you why the time is now to switch to a customer marketing platform — a move that's far quicker and painless than you probably think it is.



Why Do Super Senders Put Up With Bad ESPs?

By Roger Barnette, CEO, MessageGears

Super Senders generally detest their email service provider. That's not an exaggeration. It's like a dark family secret that no one talks about in public. But that doesn't make the problem go away.

It's always been striking to me how obvious this seems to be to everyone, but they try to ignore it because they feel like it's just the way things are. After a career managing technology companies, I've been in the email world for 3 years now. I'm new enough to have been able to come in and see things with fresh eyes. There are many reasons why the marketing cloud ESPs are, frankly, doing a terrible job serving their largest customers. To name a few:

- **The software for all the large marketing cloud platforms was first built over 20 years ago.**
- **The marketing cloud ESPs were built for "batch and blast," not personalization at scale. This fundamentally has not changed.**
- **Super Senders (the largest B2C email marketers) have invested in modern data storage systems that don't easily connect to the marketing clouds.**

- **The customer service from the marketing clouds is bad. Ask any of their customers.**
- **They're expensive.**
- **They require multi-quarter migrations that are expensive and make switching costs prohibitively high.**

The current leading enterprise ESPs are often afterthoughts in their own company's priorities: remnants of smaller companies bought up and clunkily bolted onto the larger ecosystem of services the massive company provides. These platforms were designed and built before Gmail and iPhones. It really doesn't seem possible.

It's clear that the ESP ecosystem is fundamentally broken for the Super Senders. Solving this large problem has been the mission of MessageGears from Day 1 — It's the chief reason we exist as a company.

How do we break through this current, dismal state? How do we both create a better product solution and convince modern enterprises of the value of switching from the devil they know?

Why Do Super Senders Put Up With Bad ESPs?

cont.

MessageGears has turned the industry upside down by creating a product solution that focuses on the four major disconnects between Super Senders and the ESP landscape.

- **Direct data access**
- **Personalization at scale**
- **Easy and inexpensive migration**
- **Service that Super Senders deserve**

We believe these priorities need to be the pillars of how the cross-channel messaging industry can change course and begin serving Super Senders in the way they deserve to be served.

Direct Data Access

It's the data, stupid. Enterprise marketers need direct access to their customer data in order to send personalized messaging at scale. Period. Marketing clouds don't provide this capability for large customer data sets.

Email marketing is driven by your customer data. It is its lifeblood and the key to its success. But here's the thing: Virtually all the ESPs serving enterprise customers are marketing cloud SaaS products. This simply doesn't work when the data you need for successful email personalization isn't accessible by the software you are using to personalize said emails.

This is ludicrous. This is 20-year-old technology that is holding back the email industry. SaaS ESPs were built for "batch and blast," and that's still the only thing they do well.

Getting personalized messaging right is critical for your customers today. That requires getting your data access right. Pure SaaS solutions simply aren't set up to tackle the data-related issues that large companies present, and they're not even on their way to getting there.

Personalization at scale

Customers are demanding personalized and relatable messaging. It's part of the implied contract they expect in exchange for giving you their email address and other information.

The Super Senders struggle with personalization the most. Personalizing is hard to do well at scale in the best of circumstances, but virtually impossible in a marketing cloud ESP platform if you have a customer database containing millions of records. Brands work around these data limitations by cutting static lists from their system and sending the list to their ESP. This "workaround" is cumbersome and laborious. Dynamic content is difficult except for in the most basic use cases. Don't get me started on triggered emails.

Some marketers tackle this problem by using a third-party vendor to personalize their messaging. While that can help to cobble together a solution, it's clunky, expensive, and shouldn't be necessary in today's world. It only creates yet another piece of software to implement and manage. And, by the way, if you're using one piece of software to create a list, and yet another to optimize your content, why do you need an expensive marketing cloud ESP?

The answer: You don't. You need a solution that fits neatly into your current martech stack, integrating seamlessly with your existing database and empowering you to personalize messages at whatever scale your business needs. Stop cutting lists and relying on a host of cobbled-together vendors to cover for the limitations of expensive cloud ESPs.

Easy migration

It should only take a couple days to migrate from your ESP, but we all know that's rarely the reality.

Because of their basic infrastructure requirements, it usually takes companies quarters to switch ESPs. I recently

“Enterprise marketers need direct access to their customer data in order to send personalized messaging at scale. Period.”

Why Do Super Senders Put Up With Bad ESPs?

cont.

spoke to an executive at a large brand who said it took her company over two years to migrate from one marketing cloud ESP to another one, and they had to renew the contract with the vendor in the middle of the process. We've all heard the migration horror stories and many of you undoubtedly have your own. The frustration level with vendor migration is off the charts.

These migration disasters discourage even dissatisfied marketers from wanting to make a much-needed ESP change.

Super Senders need to be able to get set up efficiently with the technology they need in order to do their job. That's where the rubber meets the road. That's what we tell ourselves every day, why I get up in the morning fired up and ready to get to work. It's the problem that's plaguing so many Super Senders, and it's one we've figured out a way to solve — by bringing our platform's technology to your data rather than the other way around. Every ESP was essentially built with the entire market in mind. But you know Super Senders have unique needs. So do we. And we're the only ones that exist specifically to meet them.

Service that Super Senders deserve

This is one of the areas where MessageGears takes a lot of pride in being entirely different. It isn't hard to migrate to our platform, and we aren't locking you up into cumbersome, penalty-laden contracts. So it's imperative that we're devoted to taking care of our customers. The fact that we've won numerous awards for our service — including the most top customer honors from The Relevancy Group's ESP Buyer's Guide for back to back years, with one customer saying our "company ethos is amazing" — may be what I'm most proud about with our team. We've made service a cornerstone of what we're doing, and those years of hard work and hiring the right people are reflected in what customers say about us.

Conclusion

It's abundantly clear that cross-channel marketing needs to be better and more efficient for Super Senders. Many marketers would love to demand more, but they just don't think it's possible. There's a better way to serve them, and to ensure they have the tools they need to deliver the best campaigns they can dream up. We've built that new way, and we're improving on it every day. It's what drives us.





4 Benefits of Connecting Directly to Your Data

Enterprise B2C marketers understand better than most the importance of having a clean and organized customer database. And with the massive amounts of data they're dealing with, getting it to a point where it's consolidated and easily accessible for marketing purposes can be a heavy, expensive lift.

Once your company has invested in the tools that can make that happen, though — whether that's partnering with a modern data warehouse (like Snowflake, BigQuery or Redshift) or building out your own solution internally — how does cross-channel message delivery fit into the data conversation? If you put all the time, money, and effort into organizing all your data, will your ESP be ready to help you take advantage of that? Or will it just stand as another obstacle that continues to make it difficult to fully utilize the tools you now have?

If you're using a marketing cloud ESP, that data still has to find a way outside your firewall and up to the cloud in order for you to use it for marketing personalization. But a direct data connection can give you the sending power of the cloud while allowing you to use the most up-to-date data possible for personalizing campaigns.

Improved 1:1 personalization

With direct, real-time access to your customer data, your ability to personalize cross-channel messaging campaigns grows exponentially. Without an ESP standing between you and your data, you don't have to make requests to use a new data point or worry about whether that awesome campaign idea you dreamed up is possible. If you've collected the data and have it in your database of record, it's ready for you to use when you want to use it. No more "How do we get a new data field added?" or "How long will it take for the ESP to actually respond and then to get that done?"

When you partner with a customer marketing platform like MessageGears that connects to your database, it's able to get out of the way and just empower your marketing team to do the job it's there to do — consistently deliver timely, relevant, and compelling content to your customers and prospects via the best channel for it. If you're fortunate enough to have a company willing to invest in organizing these massive datasets, the last thing you need is to leave yourself another obstacle in the way. Connecting directly to the database is the way to make everything work.

4 Benefits of Connecting Directly to Your Data

cont.



Significantly less I.T. involvement

Right now, what happens when the marketing team wants to cut a new list for a campaign? It likely involves going to the I.T. side of the house and talking to them about whether it meets security standards, how it can get done, and how long they can expect it to take. The more you do this — and the more painful it gets to do — the less inclined you are to walk over there again. You know you're never going to be their first (or second) priority, and you may feel like you're interrupting their work just by going over there.

But when your customer marketing platform connects directly to your database, I.T. involvement decreases significantly. Expedia has reported 50% less I.T. involvement in marketing messaging since their switch to MessageGears a few years ago. This means no more treks over to the I.T. department in order to figure out if they have time to get that list together for you or if they can fix a broken feed. Marketing can handle it themselves. And the time I.T. now doesn't have to spend helping the Marketing team, they can put toward other priorities, saving time and money across departments.

Lower costs

And that leads us to decreased costs. When time is money, inefficiencies are costly. Using a marketing cloud ESP creates a ton of them, from data lag to extra I.T. resource usage to time spent fiddling with operational tasks rather than strategic work. It can sometimes seem like the "Hurry up and wait" never ends. And all of that costs money. It's sometimes hard to quantify how much, but a week you spend waiting for your ESP to respond to your email is a week you weren't able to execute a campaign,

and could be an opportunity lost. A day spent waiting for I.T. to come to the rescue is a day when you couldn't pivot, and maybe your competitors could.

Those challenges go away with real-time data access, though. No more endless waiting. No frustrations at not being able to move as fast as you want or to execute the campaign you're certain will deliver results. That efficiency brings costs down, not just for your team but for I.T. as well. And not only that, but you only pay once for data storage. With the marketing cloud ESPs, you have to store data in your database and then have the same data in the cloud for building campaigns. Why pay for both when you could only pay for one?

Customer data stays secure

Data breaches are a major problem these days for consumer-focused companies, and your data is never safer than when it's behind your firewall. Every time you move data out to your ESP's marketing cloud, the chances of a catastrophic breach increase. Once it's out there, its security is essentially beyond your control. If your ESP's security is compromised, your data that's stored there may very well be too. And even if that happens and you end up safe, the perception from your customers could be negative if they know you use that marketing cloud ESP that suffered a breach.

One of the reasons you invested in a consolidated database in the first place was security, and a direct connection to it enables you to keep the data your customers trust you with as safe as it can possibly be. No matter how secure your ESP may seem, trusting them with your customer data is a leap of faith. And it's one that, in many cases, your I.T. team isn't going to allow, especially when it comes to your most sensitive PII. With a direct connection and KMS encryption technology, though, you can meet even the most stringent security requirements.

Breaking down silos and getting your data in order has to be one of the key steps toward a personalized cross-channel marketing strategy. But another important step forward is partnering with a platform that can connect directly to that data in order to empower you to take advantage of it.

“With the marketing cloud ESPs, you have to store data in your database and then have the same data in the cloud for building campaigns. Why pay for both when you could only pay for one?”



Why Marketing Cloud ESPs Can't Connect to Your Data

One of the questions we hear the most often from marketers when we talk about the importance of MessageGears' direct connection to your database is this: If connecting directly to the database is so essential and transformative, why don't your competitors do it too? After all, our most common competitors are massive organizations that would seem to have plenty of money and resources available to be able to do pretty much whatever they want. From the outside, it can be hard to understand why they wouldn't simply copy MessageGears if there was value in doing so.

So, why don't they? To really answer that question, we need to take a look at the history of email service providers, and why they're structured the way they are.

Acquisitions galore

The history of email itself goes back decades, but email marketing is only about 25 years old, starting in earnest when Hotmail exploded by offering free email addresses to anyone and everyone. That kicked off the age of marketing via the inbox.

And, soon, between the late 1990s and early 2000s, startups — ExactTarget, Responsys, Silverpop, etc. — began forming with the intent of helping companies deliver emails to their customers. And large SaaS B2B companies took notice of their success, seeing an opportunity to add a new service to the suite they offered their customers.

That led to a flurry of acquisitions around 2013, when Salesforce purchased ExactTarget for \$2.58 billion, Oracle bought Responsys for \$1.5 billion, IBM acquired Silverpop for \$300 million, and Adobe added little-known Neolane out of France for \$600 million. A lot of money was thrown around in order to give these huge service providers the ability to offer email marketing. But the key is that all of these ESPs were not only built close to 20 years ago, but they weren't built by the companies that now own them. They were built for a different era, by different people, for different purposes.

But why can't these big companies change the way their ESP works now, or just build a new one that connects to your data? First, they'd have to decide it was a high enough priority for them to dedicate the significant resources toward doing it,

Why Marketing Cloud ESPs Can't Connect to Your Data *cont.*

and email isn't a big enough revenue stream for them to justify it. Even if they did decide they wanted to, though, there are structural reasons it's somewhere between impossible and unreasonably difficult to actually do.

Rethinking the customer marketing platform

When a company builds a product or service, one of the first tasks is typically to define the platform's data model. The data model determines the fields, data types, and the relationships between items. After the data model is in place, all services and functionality are built on top of it. The features begin to expect certain details like what fields are available and rules for which items are related to others. As time goes on, more functionality is added, and changes to that core data model can become basically impossible.

The cycle is similar to the evolution of cars. In the beginning, the car was just a frame, motor, a set of wheels, and a very basic interior. At this stage, it would have been easy to change a core feature like moving the motor to the back of the car. But, once the design was set and cars had been produced for a century, there are expectations around how many engines a car should have. Where does the engine go? What parts do I need for a



combustible engine? Looking back, if the idea wasn't to make a combustible car with a single motor but, instead, an electric car with dual motors, you can imagine a lot of different decisions would be made.

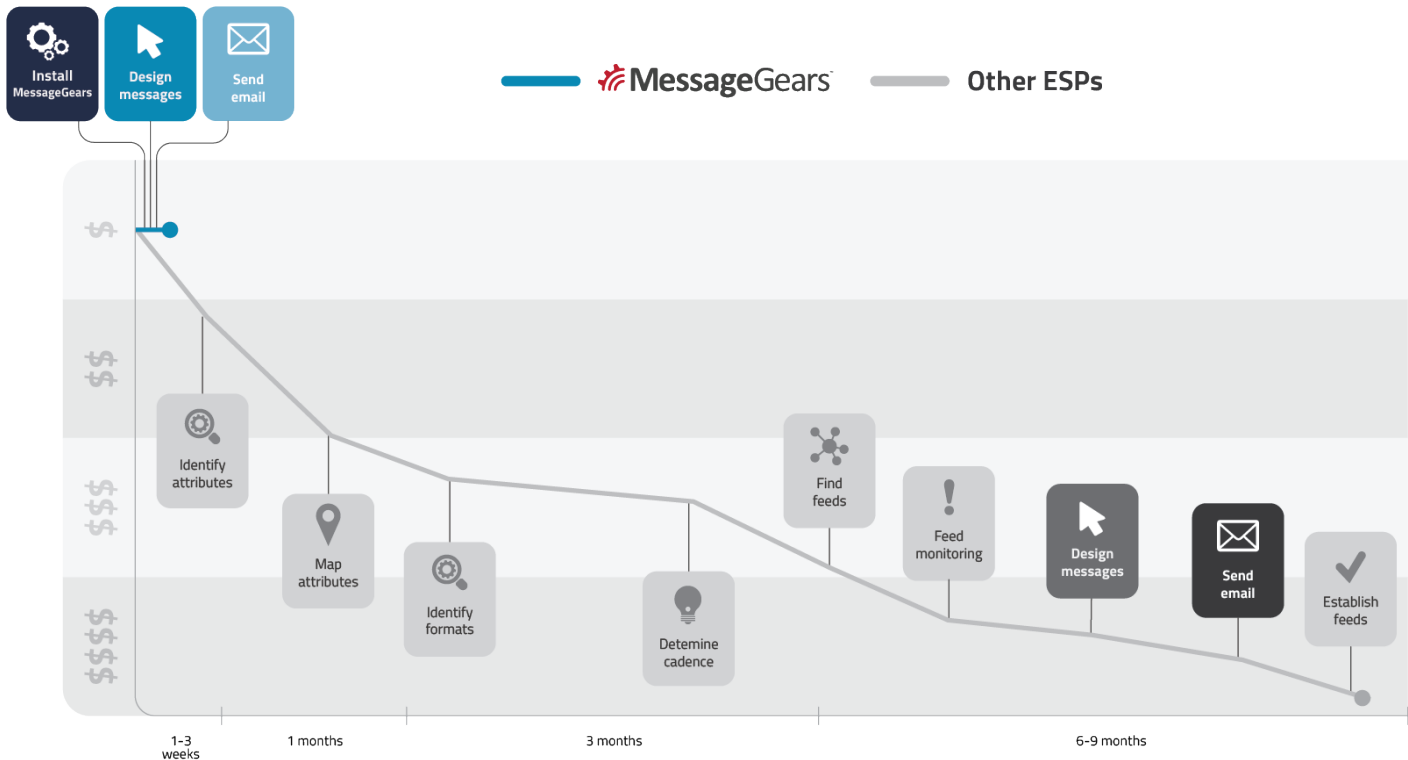
It's not impossible. At least theoretically, it could be done. But it takes rethinking virtually every aspect of the structure of how the email service provider operates. That's basically what MessageGears did, starting in 2010 with a very different view on data access and an eye toward personalized messaging that wasn't on the horizon when the previous wave of startups were built and then later acquired. That's why MessageGears is different.

Because MessageGears was built without all the existing baggage of the older ESPs, there were no practical limitations on how it could be put together. Just like when a company like Tesla stepped back and rethought how a car might work, MessageGears had a very different vision for what a customer marketing platform would look like if taking into account the challenges enterprise organizations had accessing and utilizing their data to deliver consistently personalized, thoughtful messages to their customers.

“Because MessageGears was built without all the existing baggage of the older ESPs, there were no practical limitations on how it could be put together.”

Infographic:

Why Remote ESPs Cost You More



Other ESPs

- 1. Identify attributes** - Identify all-inclusive list of attributes to power all marketing campaigns
- 2. Map attributes** - Translate customer attributes into their supported formats
- 3. Identify APIs & file formats** - I.T. ensures data transfers meet security/authorization requirements
- 4. Determine cadence** - Work with I.T. to build data feed refreshes, and decide how often you can afford to do them
- 5. Identify External Feeds** - Identify third-party data feeds; determine how to get the data to your ESP
- 6. Feed monitoring** - I.T. creates holistic monitoring plan for each feed
- 7. Design messages** - Learn your provider's unique and sometimes proprietary templating language to create emails
- 8. Send email** - Now that the data work is done, warm up your IPs and send!
- 9. Establish Reporting Feeds** - Set up feeds going back to your system to ensure access to customers' contact history

MessageGears

- 1. Install MessageGears** - Small web app sits behind your firewall and connects to your databases, installed in an hour
- 2. Design Messages** - MessageGears uses open-source templating language Freemarker; access to your data reduces template creation from days to hours
- 3. Send emails** - MessageGears elastic cloud architecture allows IP warm-ups to begin immediately; production sends start in days



Why Now is the Right Time to Make the Switch

For many Marketing and I.T. teams, there are few things they'd less readily volunteer to do than switch from their current email service provider. We hear it all the time. Even when they acknowledge the problems they have that seem insurmountable, their last switch was so difficult and time consuming — even after they were told it'd be easy — that the devil they know can seem like a better bet than the one they don't.

Some of the objections may even be swimming through your head right now. Maybe what we're saying makes a lot of sense in a vacuum, but there are too many obstacles for you to commit to the logistical challenges of a switch. Perhaps you've even broached the topic with the decision makers in your organization, and you don't see much chance to convince them that a change is necessary or cost-effective in the near term.

Below, we've addressed the objections we hear most frequently from prospects, and explain why, understandable as your concerns may be, we really are different and well worth making the change.

MessageGears' core tenet is that it connects directly to my data. Is this solution going to drive up my data costs?

As we outline in our section on transitioning to MessageGears, most remote messaging providers consume time and money understanding how to get your data into their platform. These hidden costs that are inherent to these solutions drive a lot of spend for enterprises due to the manpower and time that it takes to solve these problems.

MessageGears cuts out inherent spend due to:

- **The sheer volume of data no longer being shipped back and forth to an ESP**
- **The dedicated IT resources inherent to supporting this volume**
- **The reduction in issues that arise when constantly shipping data back and forth**

By focusing your resources on your own data environment, MessageGears saves money and IT costs by up to 50%.

Why Now is the Right Time to Make the Switch *cont.*



Is I.T. OK with connecting directly to data? Does I.T. like you?

Most marketing organizations are used to getting the cold shoulder from I.T. teams. After all, most requests take time and resources and can add to the long backlog typically present for technology orgs.

However, I.T. teams love MessageGears because we reduce these requests and headaches, allowing them to directly control what happens in their environment.

Does my team assume more responsibility with a solution that relies solely on our data/ infrastructure?

Similar to concerns with data access and usage, MessageGears actually reduces the amount of involvement needed from I.T. teams and infrastructure by skipping the need to transport large amounts of data.

But in addition to that, we typically see that I.T. teams love that they are able to have control over the key pieces of hardware and infrastructure you need to get critical messages out. With no more relying on third parties to ensure that services don't fail at peak volumes, I.T. is now in the driver's seat to be the "good guy" for marketing in a more collaborative environment.

“Investing in a modern data platform is one of the best ROI and cost-positive investments you can make, both in marketing and across the organization.”

Our data isn't in a good spot right now. We're going to have to change way too much about our data setup to work with MessageGears

Investing in a modern data platform is one of the best ROI and cost-positive investments you can make, both in Marketing and across the organization. That's why MessageGears has teamed up with our partner, Snowflake, to make your data usable throughout your enterprise. Using MessageGears in conjunction with a Snowflake data warehouse will both save you money and allow you to communicate with your users by analyzing and understanding who they are and what they want.

We have too much custom reporting and configuration with our current vendor to be able to move to anyone else

Switching messaging systems is daunting — the amount of custom reporting and data movement that needs to be replicated and re-done can make it feel impossible. That's why MessageGears has put an emphasis on delivering data to you in real time. The ability to consume all audience and engagement data without a prescribed schema puts you in the driver's seat to satisfy any of your reporting or analytics needs.

MessageGears won't be able to scale to our needs, which are massive and frequently changing

The most common bottlenecks for other ESPs are MTA capacity and rigid, multi-tenant data structures. The MessageGears system architecture breaks through these bottlenecks by offering a schema-less customer data integration and an elastic personalization and delivery service layer.

Connecting directly to client data sources enables marketers to personalize content based upon their internal structure. MessageGears processing a schema-less structure allows for large, heavy sends to be broken into smaller batches of data and elastically distributed across our infrastructure.

Why Now is the Right Time to Make the Switch

cont.

Why wouldn't I just trust an all-in-one marketing cloud?

Although they are big names that you are likely familiar with, many of the large campaign management systems aren't as all together as they appear.

To understand how these Everychannel Service Providers evolved, consider that for many of them, message sending wasn't their original core competency. Instead, these software giants acquired different messaging providers throughout the years to cobble together a disconnected solution that attempts to do everything. In fact, time to integrate these systems with large enterprises can take up to 5 years to fully implement.

Which is not to say these solutions don't do some things well. Indeed, they can be great messaging tools. But even at their best, they aren't designed to be the only system of record for messaging and often need users to utilize their system to do absolutely everything marketing related. Super Senders have massive data needs and the ability to massively scale across every channel, breaking the all-in-one model and needing a tool built to cater to their needs.





Switching ESPs: A Deliverability Perspective

Deliverability is always a major concern when switching ESPs — in many cases, it's one of the key factors driving the change. Whether it's a major reason you're switching or something you haven't considered at all, deliverability is almost certain to be impacted by your ESP move.

There are a few common ways moving ESPs is likely to impact your deliverability:

New infrastructure (IP/Domain)

The major mailbox providers determine how to route mail based on patterns; they expect to see mail with your content and URLs coming from a specific domain and IP address. Whenever the providers see your content and URLs in messages sent from a different IP address or domain (or both), they can't immediately be sure the mail is legitimately from you. As a result, they are likely to route at least a portion of your mail to the Spam/Bulk folder initially. If recipients respond positively (low spam complaints, high engagement), more mail is progressively routed to the inbox. To reiterate, you're almost guaranteed to see a change in deliverability during the early stages of switching ESPs. An experienced deliverability team

will be able to guide you through the process to ensure any changes are confined to temporary blips.

Volume limitations

The providers also identify patterns in sending volume. They expect to see your brand (IP/domain/content) sending volume regularly — a roughly specific amount of mail should be seen each day/week from your brand. When you send from a new IP and/or domain, the patterns of sending the provider "remembers" no longer exist. You must start from scratch and build a new sending pattern with the new infrastructure. This volume ramp-up typically starts with a few hundred to a few thousand messages per day per IP address, and increases methodically over time until your full volume is reached.

Address book/whitelist changes

This one is less common in the current email landscape, but you could see a deliverability impact if your recipients have added your specific From address or IP address to their whitelist or address book. Typically, it's recommended to inform your recipients of the change before switching vendors, with

Switching ESPs: A Deliverability Perspective *cont.*



Whether it's a major reason you're switching or something you haven't considered at all, deliverability is almost certain to be impacted by your ESP move.

whitelisting details for your new From Address/domain and IP addresses.

Differences in reporting.

When switching ESPs, senders will notice a large difference in metrics like opens or bounces between the two platforms. These differences are usually not caused by an actual deliverability issue, but by differences in the reporting used by each vendor. Open rates can be particularly affected if the provider automatically records an open when a click occurs. This could mean that automated clicks generated by anti-virus software artificially inflate the open rate. For bounces, almost every ESP processes and categorizes bounces slightly differently, so it's very hard to compare apples to apples when looking at baseline metrics from separate platforms.

While all these points are important to keep in mind, equally important is choosing a martech partner who can dedicate to you the support you need to ensure this migration is successful. With many large, well-known marketing cloud ESPs, it can be an immense challenge merely to get any sort of support professional to spend any time with you, walking you through these steps and getting you to the finish line.

With MessageGears, though, each client is assigned a dedicated customer success representative, who can be reached at any time of the day to answer any questions and make sure that each step of this process goes smoothly. We do that because we know your email program is too important to your business's bottom line for it to not be treated with the utmost attention, and we know that reaching the inbox is essential for your campaigns to be successful. Getting deliverability right is a foundational goal, and these guidelines will help get you there.





How MessageGears Scales Delivery to Customer Demand

MessageGears is the world's first hybrid Customer Marketing Platform, and has been sending large volumes of messages for demanding marketers since 2011. Our ability to scale and meet the demands of Super Senders across the world stems from three key pieces of functionality, inherent in our system architecture:

1. **Direct connection to on-premises data, with no prescribed schema or data format**
2. **Efficient bulk message processing, optimizing data payloads for delivery**
3. **Ability to scale message render and delivery units (MTAs), ensuring expedient message delivery and SLA throughput**

Direct Connection to Data

The most common bottlenecks for ESPs are MTA capacity and rigid, multi-tenant data structures. The MessageGears system architecture breaks through these bottlenecks by offering a schema-less customer data integration and an elastic personalization and delivery service layer.

Connecting directly to client data sources enables marketers to personalize content based upon their internal structure. MessageGears processing a schema-less structure allows for large, heavy sends to be broken into smaller batches of data and elastically distributed across our infrastructure.

Our sending platform initiates the message sending process by selecting data used in the templating process from the user's data source, and placing it into a cloud-based file of variable size according to the size of the recipient list. Although these files typically contain template-level data (email address, name, etc.), these "batches" of data are cryptographically secured via Amazon KMS encryption, and are readable only by the MessageGears cloud processing environment.

Once all of the necessary recipient data has been extracted and processed into a consumable format, an API call to MessageGears' cloud environment begins the next step of the delivery process.

How MessageGears Scales Delivery to Customer Demand

cont.

Bulk Message Processing

It's worth noting that transactional messages skip bulk message processing, and are sent directly to message render and delivery. For sends to multiple recipients, upon completion of recipient upload, marketing campaign requests data flow leads into MessageGears cloud environment, where large data files are broken into more consumable "payloads" of data.

Operating on a single large list of unbounded size is inefficient, and would inhibit the scale and speed at which messages can be processed. This is a typical barrier for many common ESPs. However, MessageGears' direct connection to data allows for much faster file processing in this regard. Because cloud processing is separated from the environment data store, MessageGears is able to disseminate recipient batches containing millions of recipients into smaller "payloads" of a more easily processable and digestible number of recipients.

Once the MessageGears cloud environment further breaks our customers' bulk jobs into payloads, the payloads are able to be effectively and efficiently redistributed across multiple message queues that are accessible by any number of render and sending agents (MTAs) for personalization and delivery.

Message Render and Delivery

MessageGears' ability to separate bulk job processing from critical render and delivery services leads to an elastic resource pool of rendering and send agents. These agents are responsible for:

- The evaluation of the freemarker render of all constituent parts of the message (template, recipient, context, etc.) and appropriate recording of render errors
- The delivery of each message on its intended channel, and recording of feedback from partner (PMTA, SMS, Push) on message delivery or failure

Our rendering agents are all constantly polling the previously mentioned payload queues for work. This technique provides virtually unlimited horizontal scaling, even at the individual job level. Our MTAs are thus designed to scale so

bulk campaigns can be delivered at the same rate regardless of batch size. Because transactional messages are not processed in line with bulk messages, they are fed directly to our rendering agents to ensure processing times are always in line with SLAs.

Scalability in other areas of our platform is managed through more traditional techniques, using load balancers and auto-scaling server instances. Our analytics data leverages enterprise data streams to generate metrics on sends every minute and operates independently from all core processing.

Finally, the platform itself is distributed across multiple AWS availability zones for redundancy and configured with auto-scaling configurations to meet client demand. External monitoring and internal telemetry make sure the system is always running efficiently and in a healthy manner.



Connecting directly to client data sources enables marketers to personalize content based upon their internal structure.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver smartphone, with a white coffee cup with a black lid visible in the background. The image is used as a header for the article.

Raising The Standards for Cross-Channel Messaging

In recent years, many leading brands have diligently been working on eliminating data silos and ensuring that there's one source of truth for all of their data. New information pours in by the second. Marketers instantly use that data to create highly personalized experiences on the web and mobile apps in real time. Online retailers work hard to make their website a well-orchestrated, enjoyable experience for customers, often with highly customized elements and personalized recommendations. Everything is immediate. The standards are high. No retailer would accept their website being too slow to respond to customer behavior.

Yet, at the same time, many companies seem to make an exception when it comes to messaging, as if sending email, mobile push, and SMS is inherently slower and they have to deal with it. Industry-dominant marketing clouds and ESPs require you to remove data from the central source of truth and sync it to their system, creating an unnecessary silo and wasting precious time.

At MediaPost's recent Email Insider Summit, a brand panelist said her company recently made a big investment

in a new centralized database, but her team had no way to access it for personalized messaging campaigns. The whole room laughed, everyone in the audience being able to relate to the issue. This is a known problem, an open secret in the email marketing world. So much so that people offer a knowing chuckle when someone brings it up in a room full of marketers.

We've been institutionalized.

Why are we OK with this? Instead of laughing about this being "the way things are," why aren't we mad as hell about it? Companies spend so much time and money on marketing and technology. At the same time, we're complacent in the face of crippling problems we've convinced ourselves aren't so bad. We repeatedly invest in technology that doesn't let us do our jobs efficiently. But we don't hold ESPs and other vendors accountable to offer meaningful solutions.

Accepting that cross-channel messaging is somehow different and less dynamic is part of what's kept the big brands from engaging meaningfully with customers and meeting the customers' standards. Cross-channel messaging is permission-based: people raised their hands, asked us to contact them, and

Raising the Standards for Cross-Channel Messaging *cont.*



have often done business with us. These are the people we want to communicate with. And, in most cases, we have time to plan what we want to say to them via these channels. Yet somehow, we still get things wrong.

To start taking full advantage of the power of the direct line to customers that messaging provides, we must find vendors that efficiently utilize data where it already lives. Once we're able to have a complete view of our customers in one place, we'll be able to understand them a little better. The technology that taps into our single source of truth then allows us to execute better.

And we need to be better.

What do customers really want?

We can talk about email and other direct communication channels having superior ROI all day long, but something's broken between enterprise brands and their subscribers. A 2017 article from McKinsey puts it bluntly: "What customers want and what businesses think they want are often two different things." Here's what they determined customers really want when it comes to personalized communications:

- Relevant recommendations they wouldn't have thought of themselves
- Knowing them well enough to time messaging appropriately
- Reminding them of things they should be keeping track of but aren't
- Being able to see them across any touchpoint seamlessly
- Sharing value in a way that's meaningful to them

“Make sure your standards for your personalized messaging campaigns are at least as high as the standards of those you're delivering to.”

Delivering these sorts of messages to customers is nearly impossible without visibility and technology that works in real time from a single source of truth. While we need to hold our ESPs accountable, we also need to hold ourselves accountable that we're demanding solutions that help us deliver consistently relevant messages to our customers, not just accepting that cross-channel messaging is irreparably broken. It isn't, and we don't have to accept less than what our customers want. Demand more. Make sure your standards for your personalized messaging campaigns are at least as high as the standards of those you're delivering to.



Delivering Cross-Channel Messaging Success

MessageGears is the only customer marketing platform built for today's enterprise. We empower marketers to deliver more relevant, personalized messages. Our unique technology connects directly with a company's database, enabling marketers to maximize the value of their customer data in real time. Join sophisticated marketers at Orbitz, Rakuten Rewards, and Expedia who rely on MessageGears to deliver more personalized cross-channel messaging campaigns.

For more information, please visit
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