

# SafeToSend® Helps Bowflex Reconnect with Customers

## Summary

Email marketers usually use FreshAddress's SafeToSend email validation service purely for list hygiene. This time, a noted manufacturer of home fitness equipment discovered it could combine its own customer data with its SafeToSend results to learn even more about its customers and their engagement with email.

## The Challenge: Declining Deliverability

Bowflex is one of the most recognized brands in the world of premier home fitness equipment. It has been using email as a marketing channel for many years. Like most brands with long-established lists, Bowflex began to see that its deliverability to inboxes was falling, threatening the value of this marketing channel. The company's ESP also approached the brand to discuss issues it was seeing. "We were seeing deliverability problems that were not going away," said Steve Wages, email marketing specialist for Bowflex.

The brand began working on its own to try to improve its inbox placement, Wages said. "We started suppressing segments of our list to figure out where the problems were. That fixed the problem, but now we weren't communicating with those people. We realized this was only a short-term fix." At the same time, the email team began an internal audit to look for suspicious behavior, such as bot-driven signups, bogus email addresses or anything else that appeared out of the ordinary.

"We sliced and diced our email subscriber information to find out what was going on," Wages said. "It was an interesting exercise, but it didn't prove to be useful. We would find trends and look for reasons why there was a large import of addresses on a certain date. Each time, we would find a valid reason for the data anomalies. Eventually, it became clear we needed to go through a hygiene process."

## Vendor Selection

"Our ESP had some capabilities for list hygiene, but we decided to use a third party that specialized in situations like ours. We found there was a wide range of prices and levels of service and security but chose to go with FreshAddress for several reasons," Wages said.

"We appreciated the thorough analysis and guidance on how to treat different groups within our email database," he said. "We also needed the service to check and correct malformed email addresses instead of just getting rid of them. We needed to do more than just a one-time list cleanse. We intend to do real-time validation at the point of opt-in, so the API solution was something we wanted from a vendor."

"Some hygiene services seemed like they were just web interfaces. There was no one you could interact with. We could talk to a salesperson at FreshAddress, and having a project manager gave us a contact we could check in with during the hygiene process."

## Resolving the Issues Revealed During Processing

The company used FreshAddress' SafeToSend validation service and found about 2% of the Bowflex list was unsafe for sending. "We were a little surprised to find our list was cleaner than the average list FreshAddress works with," Wages said. "But the process did turn up a little of everything: spamtraps, role addresses, invalid addresses across the board."

"We took their recommendations and applied them to all of these different problems, like suppressing problem addresses and correcting the ones that they could validate, like 'gmali.com' to 'gmail.com.'"

Using FreshAddress status codes, Wages and his team divided the Bowflex list into three parts: email addresses that were clearly sent to safely ("This was the vast majority," he said), those that were clearly unsafe (spam traps and the like) and then a "gray area" of email addresses that were valid but problematic, like role accounts.

"FreshAddress was a great partner in the process. Our project manager was able to estimate how long it would take and kept us up to date with status reports on how it was going," he said.

"We had a handful of questions about the results, and FreshAddress gave us some eye-opening explanations that helped us understand things better."

## Leveraging the Data

After receiving the results from FreshAddress, Bowflex used its own customer data to shed even more light on the “gray area” addresses on its list. “We overlaid our own email response data on this segment to see if anyone belonging to those addresses was opening or clicking on them. If we saw that activity, we considered them engaged,” Wages said.

“We found that about a third of these addresses had some engagement with us, so we marked these as OK” he said. “If we didn't see any activity, we suppressed them and are now working to see how we can further carve out that gray area.”

## Testing the Results

After Bowflex applied its SafeToSend results to its database, it experimented with emailing to “gray area” addresses that had showed engagement. “We didn't have any problems, and our ESP didn't come back to us with any issues,” Wages said.

The company is able to email its list more confidently now and is building a deeper base of knowledge around the addresses in its database, especially around identifying inactive subscribers.

## Next Steps

“We are looking at FreshAddress’ API solution that will identify problems at opt-in,” Wages said. “We recognize that if you have ‘unprotected’ email sign-ups on the site, you're leaving yourself vulnerable. Even if people aren't trying to be malicious, they might inadvertently ‘fat-finger’ their email addresses. That can be more problematic than I previously understood. The API solution should maintain our list hygiene and will supplement our reCAPTCHA to prevent bot attacks.”

“Overall, we’re really happy with FreshAddress and look forward to an ongoing partnership.”

## About FreshAddress

FreshAddress is an email marketing intelligence company that helps businesses clean, protect, and grow their email lists for maximum return on their investment. Service offerings include industry-leading, patented Email Change of Address (ECO) service, SafeToSend® Email Validation, and a full suite of appending services. Founded in 1999, FreshAddress is privately held and based in Newton, MA. For more information, please visit [www.freshaddress.com](http://www.freshaddress.com).