Using a valid From address

What's a valid email address anyway?

In theory, some addresses most people wouldn't recognize as a valid email address, are in fact valid as defined by RFCs (5321, 5322 and 3696).

> "very.unusual.@.unusual.com"@example.com

indeed is a valid email address while

> john..doe@example.com

is not.

New TLDs and Internationalization makes it even harder to find out if an email address is valid.

> john.doe@example.cologne

is valid, and

> чебурашка@ящик-с-апельсинами.рф

is valid as well.

Validating an email address is a really hard task. Some tried huge regular expressions to solve this[1], but they are unreadable and do not cover every case. This leads to the conclusion that, as a sender, you should not only use a valid address in your From header, but also one that is simple and practical, because some exotic, but still valid, addresses might not be processed correctly by MTAs and other involved systems like spam filters.

So what's a practical From address? Basically anything which is simple and validates with really simple regular expressions people tend to use all over the Internet. A basic example is:

> newsletter@eco.de

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1   http://www.ex-parrot.com/~pdw/Mail-RFC822-Address.html

What about the Display Name?

Of course not only the email address needs attention, the Display Name is also an important part of the From header. Again, the RFC allows weird, but still valid, formats and, as a sender, you don't want deliverability issues caused by valid, but exotic formats. A common From header with Display Name looks like this:

From: John Doe <john.doe@example.com>

or

From: "John Doe" <john.doe@example.com>

The double quotes are not mandatory, but if the Display Name contains a special character like a ".", the double quotes are needed. That means something like:

From: "eco - Verband der Internetwirtschaft e.V." <newsletter@eco.de>

is valid, while

From: eco - Verband der Internetwirtschaft e.V. <newsletter@eco.de>

is not.

Our recommendations are:

- put angle brackets around the email address

- put a space between the Display Name and the email address, but no space between the email address and the angle brackets

- if special characters are used in the Display Name, put it in double quotes

Conclusion

Setting up a valid, and also practical, From address isn't that hard, but still can cause serious issues if not done right. So always double check that everything is set up correctly.

Additionally, as you want to make it as easy as possible for the receivers to contact you, don't use a "do-not-reply@"-address.

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